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RADIO AND LITERATURE IN AFRICA: LEE NICHOLS' "CONVERSATIONS WITH AFRICAN WRITERS"

By

©

ARBOGAST KEMOLI AKIDIVA

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT

This bi-focal study documents radio dissemination of African literary and cultural materials in the 1970s focusing on Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers" conducted in the same decade. The Lee Nichols programmes and the Voice of America illustrate the Outsider view and are representative of international radio broadcasting while the writers' comments constitute the Insider perspective on literary and cultural communication in Africa.

I use the Social Construction of Reality Theory to situate and investigate the mediation of perception, self esteem, identity formation literary development and productivity, and the creation of social reality through symbolic means. This theory suggests that people rooted and established in the same cultural milieu use a shared frame of reference to interpret the social worlds they inhabit. The study foregrounds radio dissemination of literary and cultural materials because radio presents varied opinions and perspectives contemporaneously and overcomes vast geographical and literacy limitations. Media Systems Dependency Theory is used to situate the efficacy of radio broadcasting in creating and disseminating personal and culturally shared beliefs about contemporary phenomena in Africa since the 1950s.

The findings suggest that African cultural propagators have not undertaken a systematic documentation and critical analysis of the use

of radio as an effective communication medium. Few serious studies have investigated Western international radio broadcasting about and to Less Developed Countries with regard to power and control dimensions within cultural communications among variegated audiences.

The writers' comments indicate that artistic practice in Anglophone Africa their creativity is severely constrained by lack of financial support; poor professional infrastructure; inadequate publishing outlets; the contentious language question; and political intolerance. Social relationships reveal contestation of power and control through words and symbolic representation of reality. The study suggests that in order to obtain a lucid understanding of these concerns, cultural purveyors should interrogate the social, theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological implications of cultural diffusion over radio.

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CHAPTER ONE

UTTERERS, HEARERS, WORD-WORLDS AND THEIR CONTEXTS

In 1994 while researching for a dissertation topic in the Andre Nitecki African Art and Culture Reading Room at the University of Alberta, I discovered a collection of Voice of America interviews with (i) African scientists, (ii) African writers, (iii) African universities' administrators and professors, and (iv) sixty-four African women of distinction. I was naturally drawn to the African writers' interviews because literature is my area of specialisation. I was amazed to find out that the writers' interviews entitled "Conversations with African Writers" consisted of 83 conversations with a cross-section of African writers of the 1950s to 1970s ranging from the accomplished and famous to the youthful yet promising neophytes of both genders. My discovery of the taped interviews was the beginning of many enjoyable hours spent travelling through varied landscapes built on words strung together by multiple accents over the airwaves. These interviews had been recorded, compiled, and produced by Lee Nichols between 1972 and 1978. (Later, he told me that he travelled across the United States, Canada and Africa to record the interviews.) In the course of my investigation of this topic, I became aware of the African Literature Association (ALA), a non-profit body devoted to the teaching of and researching in African literatures based in the United States of America. I learnt that the ALA was scheduled to hold its 21st Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio and that Lee Nichols would report on the deliberations of the ALA for the Voice of America as he had done since the early seventies.

I contacted Lee Nichols in Rockville, Maryland and he informed me that he would be at the ALA meeting. He also offered to take me to the Voice of America studios in Washington DC to introduce me to management and staff. The introduction was intended to facilitate inquiry into my evolving dissertation topic on the role of radio broadcasting and the propagation of African literature and cultural materials. I travelled to Columbus, Ohio in March, 1995 to attend the ALA conference and to interview Lee Nichols and hold consultations with some of the African and Africanist scholars regarding this research project. In Columbus, Ohio, I interviewed a number of scholars who had listened to and used the Lee Nichols interviews entitled "Conversations With African Writers" in the 1970s. I also interviewed them about the role of radio in the dissemination of literature and cultural materials.

This dissertation is an historical account of the role played by radio in the dissemination of African literature since the 1960s to the present, with special emphasis on the 1970s. Radio broadcasting plays a central role in the lives of millions of people world-wide. To many people, radio is, often times, the only source of information, entertainment and educational materials. Radio broadcasts present varied opinions, ideas and perspectives which in one way or another influence the lives of the listeners. Radio is an effective medium of communication because it overcomes the limitations posed by vast geographical distances and by illiteracy. The vast majority of the world's population has easy access to international radio broadcasts as alternative sources of information to those found in their own countries. From the research I have conducted, it would appear that African writers, scholars, educators and media specialists have neither documented nor critically analysed the use of radio as an effective medium of disseminating African literature and cultural materials.

The 1970s, which is the main period on which I focus, was an important decade in Africa as a whole for three basic reasons:

i) It was a time when many African countries undertook massive investments in development and communications infrastructure;

ii) During this decade, the cultural re-awaking and re-assertion of the 1950s and 1960s was translated into innovative curricular changes, especially in the Arts and the Humanities;

iii) The 1970s gave rise to the New International Information and Communications Order debate. The NIICO was an ideological confrontation between the Non-Aligned nations and Western nations. The central issue of contention was Western hegemonic position with regard to international information flow and cultural communications.

Radio as a Strategic Tool

Wasburn (1992) notes that the power of radio as a communications medium was recognised and effectively exploited by the Dutch, British, French, Germans and Italians who used radio broadcasts as a means of maintaining contact with their colonial agents and subjects as well as establishing vast colonial commercial empires. The Dutch began international radio broadcasts to the Dutch East Indies (present day Indonesia) in 1927. The British Broadcasting Corporation was established by a Royal Charter in 1927 the year in which some international broadcasting was undertaken. The Empire Service began operation in 1932 with programming to Britain's vast colonial possessions. The broadcast fare consisted of rebroadcasting domestic radio materials to English speakers world-wide. Most European countries transmitted literary and cultural materials that were designed to instil a sense of "home away from home" among their expatriate and settler communities (Wasburn 1992). These broadcasts emphasised the shared social and cultural heritage between those in the colonies and those in the mother countries. Similarly, radio broadcasting was used to establish links and to engender feelings of loyalty toward the colonising nation among the indigenous subjects. This process of acculturation was enhanced by the socialisation process through Western schooling. Over time, there emerged a small local indigenous elite.

Over the years, both national and local broadcasters in the United States of America, Britain, Canada, Germany, France and other European countries have broadcast cultural and literary programmes to local audiences in the colonies. Programme contents consisted of book serialisations, drama and theatre, poetry reading and renditions, interviews with writers, artists and noted scholars, and creative writing competitions. Materials have been drawn from the classical literary canon and any innovative developments from the artistic fringes within the colonial countries. In addition, these broadcasters draw from a large repertoire of folkloric, classical and popular musical materials. Almost without exception, broadcasters have developed and continue to encourage some form of dialogue with their audiences. Through radio and television broadcasting, Western broadcasters influence the literary and cultural activities of the countries in which they are located. Much of the material broadcast is drawn from a common heritage on which European culture and civilisation are founded. Whenever foreign audiences tune in to Western international radio broadcasting, they expose themselves to the cultural heritage of these countries.

National and International Media Use: A Brief Historical Background

Virtually all countries in the world today have a broadcasting system used for communication with their citizens. Radio broadcasting has become the main source of information, entertainment and educational material to the vast majority of the global population. Depending on the type of control and ownership, varied opinions, concepts, ideas and perspectives are broadcast through radio to achieve specific purposes. Radio broadcasting is so pervasive that individuals have come to depend on it, to a very large extent, for the satisfaction of their national and international news and information requirements. Hale (1975) suggested that radio broadcasting had become so powerful in shaping and influencing world opinion that no nation could afford to ignore it. Wasburn (1992) establishes that over eighty countries in the world broadcast to foreign audiences. Hachten (1987), Browne (1982) and Abshire (1976) have shown that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), Radio Moscow, and Radio Free Europe/Liberty Radio cater to vast global audiences that depend on them for news, information and entertainment.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned aspects of international radio broadcasting, I travelled to Columbus, Ohio, and Washington, DC in March and April of 1995 where I conducted a series of interviews with

African and Africanist scholars during the African Literature Association Annual Conference and at the Voice of America (VOA) respectively. Interviews with the Africanist scholars were intended to ascertain whether or not the Lee Nichols literary interviews were of any value in the dissemination and teaching of African literature. The interviews I conducted in Washington had two purposes. First, to document Lee Nichols' intentions, methods and preparation of the interview materials for radio broadcasting. Second, to establish the reasons motivating the Voice of America to continue broadcasting to foreign audiences. A preliminary analysis of these interviews reveals that the VOA is primarily concerned with disseminating American ideas and culture world-wide. The VOA's main objective is to engender a positive attitude toward America among its global audience. Richard Carlson's description of the Voice of America's global pursuits is significant in exemplifying international broadcasting media use when he says:

> Millions in China, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Burma, Romania, and Bulgaria - as well as Sub-Sahara Africa - will tell you how the VOA has inspired them in the past year and for many years before that. The quest for freedom continues and so does the VOA's indispensable mission as an intellectual greengrocer to the world, providing food for the sustenance of common ideals. Given the resources, we welcome the opportunity.
>
> (Cited in Wasburn 1992:52)

In its 1990 Report, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) aptly stated that its new agenda was to win over humanity to a Eurocentric world view:

> . . . There is a huge need for the popular re-education here, much greater than that which faced the Allies in Germany after the war. Far from being wound down, the external services of the BBC and their sister services (Radio Free Europe, Deutsche Welle, etc.) should be extended and funded more generously than ever before.
>
> (Cited in Wasburn 1992:52)

These two quotations indicate the extent to which the Voice of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation and other international broadcasters with formidable resources, have placed themselves at the forefront of the new world order with the demise of the Soviet Union. These broadcasters seem to be responding to the emerging political order with the aim of resuscitating the eighteenth-century Enlightenment idea of a civilising mission. Radio broadcasting continues to pursue the same mission today as it did at the outset and it is being used as a tactical weapon with which to wage a war of ideas through words that create specific images about other peoples and regions. As early as 1953, the Voice of America in an internal memo had identified the struggle. The memo stated:

> [We] are not in business to amuse, entertain, or simply inform our listeners. Nor are we in business because news is an end in itself. The United States is in the midst of a serious struggle for the mind of mankind and the only purpose of the News Branch - as well as the entire Voice of America - is to contribute to winning the struggle.
>
> (Alexandre 1988:12)

Context of the Study

Much research has been conducted on the topic of communications to Less Developed Countries (LDCs) or the Third World. Topics have ranged from the negative influence of and reporting by Western news agencies, films and television programming to the ownership, control and access to satellite and communications technology in the global context. However, hardly any serious studies have investigated Western international radio broadcasting about and to Less Developed Countries with regard to literary and cultural matters. Very little inquiry has been made concerning power and control dimensions within cultural communications. The Social Construction of Reality theory demonstrates that social reality is a social construct, investigating and analysing the forces that define such reality may yield significant insights on how some African societies resolved the ambiguity caused rapid social change that engulfs the continent. Focus should be laid on the relationships among a society's goals, its perspectives, its world view, in fact its very survival and continuity.

Numerous studies have documented that the global communications systems are dominated by Western nations by virtue of owning the media and the related infrastructure. Three broad concepts have emerged, namely, media imperialism, cultural domination and communications colonialism (Masmoudi, 1978; Lee 1980; McPhail, 1981; Norderstrong and Schiller, 1979; Rosenblum, 1979; Schiller, 1976; Smith, 1980; and Tunstall, 1977). These studies have revealed that analyses of the three concepts oftentimes assume a multi-disciplinary approach focusing on the mass media and their relationship to other aspects of cultural communications. Nimmo and Combs (1983:3) state that "Reality is created or constructed through communication; not expressed by it." The dissemination of symbolic matter through the mass media, especially radio, influences what audiences believe or question about their daily lives or experiences. Radio broadcasting can be used to create, maintain or alter perceptions through symbolic representation of images and metaphors of the social worlds and realities. The process can be both conscious and unconscious.

The New World Information and Communications Order Debate

Mills (1951) suggests that communications determine or shape the form of consciousness a people or nation will have of their existence. This statement bears grave implications for Africa's cultural and literary existence and continuity in a world fraught with tension, conflict and adversarial, exploitative relationships. In this dissertation, I argue that the use of radio broadcasting to disseminate cultural and literary materials is one way through which tolerance and understanding could be fostered among African countries.

Radio as a mass-communications medium is best suited for Africa - the second largest continent with diverse political, social, economic, geographic and cultural dimensions and a population of over six hundred million people and over one thousand languages. Radio programming and broadcasting are relatively inexpensive in comparison with other mass media. Similarly the institutional set-up is cheap to install and maintain relative to, for example, a television network. Radio broadcasting can reach hundreds of millions of people instantly. Most people in the Third World have some form of access to a transistor radio. The majority of African countries use radio to foster spontaneous, direct and continental communication links.

One positive result has been the lessening of misconceptions and misperceptions about and conflicts among African countries. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) sought to promote understanding, tolerance and peaceful co-existence among member states through the use of the mass media, especially radio broadcasting. Through UNESCO the Union of National Radio and Television Organisations of Africa (URTNA) was established. URTNA under the auspices of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) was envisaged to foster effective communication links between and among African nations.

Africa's numerous ideological, linguistic, social, cultural, economic, and religious diversities present both challenges and possibilities. However, there are many similarities shared by the peoples of Africa because of their colonial and imperial experiences. They inherited structures that hinder effective intra-African communication. The effects of this colonial heritage extend to all the Non-Aligned nations. These nations' efforts to engage Western nations in a debate about the adverse social, cultural, economic and political implications such domination has had on their countries have been ignored.

In 1973, the Fourth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Algiers, Algeria expressed concern over this domination (Masmoudi, 1978). Schiller (1976), Tunstall (1977), Rosenblum (1979), and McPhail (1981) among other scholars have documented that the Non-Aligned nations found the international media system problematic for the following two reasons:

i) The system did not engender effective communication among the Non-Aligned nations; and

ii) Western dominated media systems were prejudiced and biased in their reporting to and about Less Developed Countries or Third World countries.

The Non-Aligned nations managed, through UNESCO, to establish the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (also known as the MacBride Commission) under Resolution 100 and the Guidance Notes of the Medium-Term Plan adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its nineteenth session. The 1973 Fourth Summit Conference deliberations culminated in what was to become known as the New World Information and Communications Order (sometimes referred to as the New International Information Order Movement) under the auspices of UNESCO.[1] The new world information order debate was basically an ideological confrontation between Western media interests and the Third World. Mustapha Masmoudi, the Tunisian Secretary for Information, presented the findings of the UNESCO appointed Commission to investigate communications problems in a report entitled The New World Information Order in 1978. Under point 3 in the Introduction, Masmoudi states:

---

[1] Media scholars writing about this skewed relationship created terms and concepts like media imperialism (Tunstall, 1977; Lee, 1980); cultural domination (Schiller, 1976; Smith, 1980); and electronic colonialism (McPhail, 1981).

> Information plays a paramount role in international relations, both as a means of communication between peoples and as an instrument of understanding and knowledge between nations. . . . However, what must be noted . . . is that the present international information system shows a profound imbalance between developed and developing countries . . . the developed countries dominate the information circuit from start to finish. This domination affects the entire present-day transnational communications system, i.e., the news agencies, radio and television, films, reviews, books and illustrated mass circulation magazines, data banks and advertising firms. . . . The new world information order calls for a universal and willed effort of awareness.
>
> (Masmoudi 1978:1-2)

Perhaps it is instructive to note that serious scholarly investigation of information dissemination and communications problems only began in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Kim (1986) in his investigation of the New World Information Order categorises this conflictual debate into four areas, namely:

a) The stabilisation of the free flow of ideas by Western countries;
b) The emerging consciousness of Third World nations;
c) The Third World's questioning and rejection of the free flow of international information; and
d) Western countries' counter attack against the Less Developed Countries' idea of a balanced flow of international information.

Kim (1986) asserts that Western media tried to delegitimise both the Non-Aligned nations' ideas about balanced international information and UNESCO. He documents that Western media deliberately distorted the Less Developed Countries' arguments and the Less Developed Countries themselves.

In a related study, Yang (1986) examined the New International Information and Communications Order in its fifteen-year existence. Yang's study is relevant to this dissertation in so far as it points to media's gatekeeping function. Yang documents how the New York Times selectively focused on and manipulated those dimensions in the New International Information and Communications Order (NIICO) debate which cast the Non-Aligned Nations and the entire debate in very negative terms. The Times advocated the total withdrawal of the US government from UNESCO which would in the process, literally bring about the demise of UNESCO.

Thomas (1987) argues that the New International Information and Communications Order was the Third World's response to Western Countries' information and communication systems hegemonic position. He further claims that the Third World countries' efforts aimed at the creation of a new international information and communications paradigm as well as an alternate-parallel system. Thomas concludes that the New International Information and Communications Order movement led to a new formulation of social reality in the global information and communications system.

The studies referred to above point to the consistent and seemingly concerted efforts by Western nations to resist the Third World's fight against Western media hegemony. In the process, Western media turned the Non-Aligned nations into the most maligned nations. One possible explanation of the West's negative reaction to the interrogation of the role and functions of the global media systems could be that the West perceived in the debate a challenge to its hegemonic position. In order to contextualise and comprehend events, acts and phenomena in the social world surrounding the participants in this study, I relied on Sociology of Knowledge which is a branch in the discipline of Sociology.

Theoretical Orientation

Scholarship in media studies falls into various categories. I will only examine two of them for purposes of this study. One view states that media do not have any significant influence on reality. The other view suggests that media indeed do have a profound effect on how the users of media construct and perceive reality. Discussion in the sections above appropriates the second position. In this study, I have used two theoretical perspectives in documenting, describing and analysing how radio has been used to disseminate African literature. The perspectives are

i) The Social Construction of Reality Theory (SCRT); and
ii) Media Systems Dependency Theory (MSDT)

Social Construction of Reality Theory (SCRT)

The Social Construction of Reality perspective is drawn from the branch of Sociology known as Sociology of knowledge. The term Sociology of Knowledge was first used by Max Scheler in the 1920s. The term sociology of knowledge is used in this dissertation to show that all ideas and their propagators are located in a social universe. Society equips its members with a world view constructed from accumulated ideas, values and knowledge. Consequently, members of a society will develop and define their roles and identity on the basis of the world view they acquired from their society. The Social Construction of Reality perspective is often associated with the work of Alfred Schutz (1932/1967, 1962), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), and Erving Goffman (1974). Basing its premises on the work of William James, this perspective critically examines how people form their notions of reality in relation to their daily experiences. Ordinarily, people will then use these experiences to construct and interpret the world around them. William James claimed that human socialisation equipped people with a frame of reference which enabled them to interpret objects and events in their everyday lives. He noted that the process of assigning meanings to objects and events was highly subjective and arbitrary in nature. James further claimed that all the knowledge a society gathers over time became a "given" in that particular society. Its members used the given knowledge assuming that those persons they interacted with shared the same knowledge and perception of phenomena.

Schutz (1962/67) developed this idea further by stating that a culture typifies objects and events with the end result of developing ready-made action strategies, solutions and interpretations of the social world. People belonging to the same social matrix assume that the frame of reference they use in interpreting objects and events is commonly understood by each member of the group; that is, the frame of reference will bear the same meanings and interpretations of objects and events in the physical world. People then use these typifications of phenomena as action strategies in the conduct of their lives. The members rarely question the veracity of the commonly held and understood knowledge. Problems arise whenever a speaker and an audience do not share the same culture, that is, the same social world. A mismatch exists between the world of the speaker and that of the audience whenever the frame of reference shifts.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) pay special attention to how people use symbolic means to construct meanings and realities. They stress that socialisation endows a society with knowledge, values, and belief systems that legitimise the social order. Their theory reveals that the social world is in a state of perpetual flux and people are constantly adjusting to the changing circumstances. Erving Goffman (1974) developed Schutz's, Berger's and Luckmann's theses further by arguing that human beings select, organise and codify experiences relative to the shared frame of reference because the social world is fraught with ambiguity. Learned meanings are used to frame a society's sense of reality in relation to external phenomena. These theorists point out that language and literature transform the commonly held typifications of objects and events that people encounter and share as common experience beyond the ordinary. Creative use of language could present physically absent objects and events, remembered pasts as well as imaginary objects and events cast in the future. Artistic use of language could generate abstract symbolic constructions from ordinary experience. Any person who is not socialised in the usage of such typifications and the resultant symbolic manifestations will remain outside the communication circuit. Goffman (1974) concludes by saying that meanings are socially and historically conditioned and contextualised, that is, people in society use institutionalised meanings to frame their daily experiences. Goffman noted that socialisation will provide an individual or organisation with particular evaluative strategies of assessing events and experiences. People use such meanings or frames of reference on a daily basis to render phenomena intelligible. World views will vary according to the social situatedness of its members both between societies and within different portions of the same society (Berger 1963). Because human beings undergo varied socialisation processes, it is not possible for them to have the same frame of reference. Such a situation leads to frame conflicts. Members of a group who have access to power will, if need be, employ coercive means to appropriate communication resources through which they perpetuate framing of events and objects under debate.

Media System Dependency Theory (MSDT)

This dissertation documents and analyses the role played by the medium of radio in the production and dissemination of African literature between the 1950s and 1970s. The second theory, the Media Systems Dependency Theory links the Social Construction of Reality

Theory and the role of media in the construction of social reality (Adoni and Mane 1984). The Media Systems Dependency Theory is important in that it critically analyses and demonstrates that in modern society, the majority of people do not learn about cultural realities and phenomena through direct experience but through the mass media, especially radio broadcasting. In their analysis of political behaviour, beliefs, and the creation of political reality Nimmo and Combs state that " . . . few people learn about politics through direct experience; for most persons political realities are mediated through mass and group communication, a process resulting as much in the creation, transmission and adoption of political fantasies as in realistic views of what takes place" (1983). Wasburn illustrates the validity of Nimmo's and Combs' statement by citing a cross national study conducted by Cohen, Adoni, and Bantz (1990). The sample for this study was drawn from the United States, Britain, Germany, Israel and South Africa. The study set out to document the respondents' perception of the complexity of a foreign conflict, its intensity, and probable resolution. The researchers found out that the respondents' perceptions correlated to the presentation of social conflict in general and the type of television news they watched. In a study of the American public's perception of its politicians, Edelman

(1988) documents that the mass media created political reality for its audiences. Commenting on these two studies, Wasburn (1992) states

> . . . Political language is political reality; there is no other so far as the meaning of events to actors and spectators is concerned. Media offer accounts of political leaders to the mass public which accepts or rejects these constructions in accord with their perceptions of their own material and ideal interests . . . whether people view themselves as confronting news, editorials, or propaganda, experiences with these symbolic materials shape what they believe, question, or do not believe about political reality. In modern society, people depend on the mass media to provide such experiences.
>
> (Wasburn 62-63)

These citations validate the view that people in modern societies are influenced by media resources in the conduct of everyday tasks. The Media Systems Dependency Theory analyses how media collect, create, and manipulate raw data and disseminate information. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) have identified three types of media dependencies in modern societies. *Action orientation dependencies* occur whenever people utilise mass media information in attempts to comprehend themselves, their immediate surroundings and events in the past and future. The second form of dependency, *social understanding dependencies*, occurs whenever people use media information resources to understand and interpret other people and culture. The third type of dependency, *interaction orientation dependencies* appears when individuals rely on media information resources about behaviours deemed appropriate in interacting with others belonging to different social groups. These researchers documented that whenever individual members of society encounter an ambiguous situation, they will show a higher dependency on mass media information resources in trying to resolve the ambiguous situation. This behaviour manifests itself in nations where there is tremendous social change occurring.

Because it is impossible for people to directly experience and access all phenomena, they have come to depend on media information to understand and interpret people, culture, and past, present and future events. The greater the need to access media, the greater the power media will have on that society. African societies have been undergoing tremendous social transformation for the past three centuries. The pace of change has been so bewildering that many events and situations remain ambiguous, thereby causing people to experience various forms of anxiety, tension and sometimes conflict. As a result, most African societies have turned to media information, especially radio, as a means of reconstructing a new social universe. It is my firm conviction that a serious and judicious use of radio broadcasting would enable the vast populations of Africa to perform two things:

i) Retrieve a wholesome sense of who they are; and
ii) Create a cohesive new socially constructed universe amidst momentous change.

It is crucial to point out that media are dependent on the political structure and prevailing ideology of the society in which they exist (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989). To a limited extent, I will later examine the relationship between media and the sponsoring agencies in my analysis of the gatekeeping function in information gathering and dissemination.

It is against this background that I chose to study the contribution made by Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers," and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's literature broadcasts to Schools. The Lee Nichols series of literary programmes and the Voice of Kenya radio broadcasts offered their audiences different perspectives about African social universes. Nichols' programmes were conducted as a series of conversations between him and the African writers that he interviewed. These writers discussed the critical issues of their times, which included the role radio played in establishing and consolidating a healthy self image among the local indigenous elite in particular and the peoples of Africa in general. The Social Construction of Reality Theory and Media Systems Dependency Theory were useful in describing and accounting for the formation of cultural identity and content analysis of "Conversations with African Writers." With reference to "Conversations with African Writers," the following questions were investigated:

i) How and to what extent did the African writers interviewed use a ready-made frame of reference in their writing about African issues?
ii) Why and to what purposes did they use such a frame of reference?

"Conversations with African Writers," is a good example of how a broadcaster shows unusual sensitivity with regard to the symbolic universes of the speakers and their respective audiences. The speakers are African writers speaking with/to African audiences. Both speakers and listeners share a cultural heritage with a set of beliefs, symbols, rituals and sacred places that are crucial in identity formation and interpretation of the social universes they inhabit.

Significance of the Study

A systematic descriptive documentation of the role played by radio in the dissemination of African literature has not received adequate attention. Surprisingly, it has attracted almost no serious attention by scholars of African literature at all (Arnold, 1990). I hope this study will provide a basis for writers, scholars and communications specialists to investigate the theoretical implications of cultural diffusion and transfusion over the airwaves. Lee Nichols' account of the VOA's set-up, his work in the Africa Service and my interviews with the VOA management and staff offer insight about the processes involved in content selection and programming to foreign heterogeneous audiences. Lee Nichols' encounter with alien literary and cultural materials could act as a point of departure for African cultural practitioners and theorists on how to effectively propagate and disseminate African cultural content both within and outside Africa.

This study is significant because it documents the views of African writers on the crucial debates about the role of language in artistic and literary expression, curricular innovations, self consciousness, sense of audience and publishing in African countries. This study is significant in demonstrating that wide coverage and immediate accessibility make radio the ideal medium of expression on the African continent enveloped in diversity. Similarly, the dissertation identifies power of expression and the exercise of power and control through expression as areas that merit urgent research by African scholars. As an illustration of this aspect of conversation, the writers' views expressed in "Conversations with African Writers" about the artists' role in society are compared and contrasted with the role that traditional artists played in their societies.

Delimitations of this Study

The research focus was limited primarily to a description and analysis of Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers" series of programmes, and the Voice of America's and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's dissemination of African literature through radio in the 1970s, the decade in which the VOA literature recordings were made. It was also the decade when significant investment was being made by African countries in communications and educational infrastructure.

This study is not an examination of the history of international radio broadcasting. Although issues related to truth and propaganda, cultural domination, imperialism and the international information order are not the central foci in this dissertation, they are acknowledged as pertinent areas of serious scholarly study and research. This study did not investigate whether the VOA broadcasts had a two-way effect, that is, upon both African and non-African audiences. The theoretical implications arising from these issues were considered to fall beyond the study's scope.

Sample Selection

I chose to study Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers" and the Voice of America's broadcasting of African literature because the data were a good example of the use of radio to disseminate literary and cultural materials. Lee Nichols' work is important because he presents to Africans what African writers said about the challenges, struggles, failures and successes of a continent in the midst of tremendous political, cultural and economic transformations. Through "Conversations with African Writers," the audience is presented with the case of the "Outsider other" interviewing a foreign people in a non-obtrusive manner. His interviewees are given avenues through which they reminisce about what they perceive as the crucial issues of the 1970s. The radio broadcasts could be described as the interstices of different worlds coming together through the window of imagination.

Through the Voice of America's "Conversations with African Writers" broadcasts, scholars and those involved with cultural matters get a glimpse of how an *external* international broadcaster compiles, processes and disseminates foreign cultural material.

I selected the writers' comments about African issues and concerns and the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation literary and cultural programming to act as an *internal* illustration of the use of radio by an

African country in shaping a national literary consciousness. The Kenyan example is used to show curricular innovation by an African country responding to local literary and cultural needs in terms of the issues and concerns expressed by the African writers in the Lee Nichols literary programmes. Since Kenya is my home country, I had easier access to research and greater acquaintance with materials there than elsewhere. I had ready access to the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE); the Ministry of Education; the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (formerly, The Voice of Kenya); the Nairobi-based Union of Radio and Television Networks of Africa (URTNA) Programme Exchange Centre; and the African Curriculum Organisation at Kenyatta University. By virtue of being a Faculty member at Kenyatta University, I had direct access to the Universities and other educational and research institutions in Kenya. Furthermore, Kenya has been a leader in the areas of literary broadcasting and curricula innovation.

Methodology

I used an interdisciplinary approach combining (i) an historical description of literature radio broadcasting in Kenya and the Lee Nichols programmes (ii) the Social Construction of Reality Theory and (iii) the Media System Dependency Theory in analysing the data. I also used Kenya government documents to contextualise the policy and practice on language, literature teaching and the role played by radio broadcasting in the dissemination of African literature specifically in Kenya and the rest of Africa in general. In addition, I conducted interviews and on-site observation of the actual radio programme recording at the Voice of America (VOA) studios in Washington, DC. I also utilised my knowledge of and experience as a literature and English language animator with the Kenya Institute of Education's (KIE) language arts and literature broadcasts to schools programmes and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) in speaking to and assessing the role of radio broadcasting in the Kenyan educational system. I also had access to the URTNA Programme Exchange Centre in Nairobi, Kenya for information that informed the descriptions. The central focus of the study was content analysis of the Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers." The writers' introspection formed the internal foci on the central issues of their time. The study data sample, "Conversations with African Writers," was drawn from Lee Nichols' vast collection of literary materials in his African interviews series. It should be pointed out that only five sets of "Conversations with African Writers" interview tapes exist in the following places:

i) In the archives at the Voice of America;
ii) At the Library of Congress;
iii) At the Indiana University Library;
iv) At the W. E. B. Dubois Institute in Accra; and
v) In the Andre Nitecki African Art and Culture Reading Room, University of Alberta.

The University of Alberta has some unedited master tapes, which are unavailable anywhere else in the world. The Lee Nichols interviews collection consists of a) Conversations with African Writers; b) Interviews with African Scientists; and c) Interviews with Administrators and Professors in African Universities.

"Conversations with African Writers" interviews constitute about forty hours of edited dialogue between Lee Nichols and the eighty three writers with whom he conversed. I spent a considerable amount of time listening to and transcribing the material that I needed for this study. My task was made less strenuous because Nichols had already edited the conversations and made them radio-ready to last thirty minutes from the original two to three hour-long interviews.

In order to contextualise and have a deeper understanding of the "Conversations with African Writers," series of programmes, I conducted in-depth interviews with Lee Nichols and other resource persons at the Voice Of America headquarters in Washington DC (Appendices I and II). The purpose of this series of interviews was to corroborate data on the VOA's "Conversations with African Writers" programmes and the VOA's policy and mandate. Similarly, I used relevant aspects of Lee Nichols' experiences contained in his unpublished autobiography to situate the social and professional influences that might have a bearing on his work.

The writers' ideas and comments regarding literary and cultural production and consumption in Africa form an internal view concerning literary and cultural communication with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation as an exemplar of the medium of such communication.

An additional series of interviews was conducted with African and Africanist scholars during their 1995 African Literature Association Annual Meeting and Conference held in Columbus, Ohio (Appendix V). The purpose of these interviews was to gather current supplementary data on African literature radio broadcasts in other African countries apart from Kenya. Some of the African and Africanist scholars had been interviewees in the "Conversations with African Writers" series, while others had utilised the series of programmes in the teaching of African literature in the 1970s. Lee Nichols willingly discussed with me the various aspects of the findings.

The Case Study

a) External illustration

The case study is based on a series of eighty-three interviews of African writers conducted by Lee Nichols in the 1970s when he worked for the Voice of America (VOA), Africa Service Division. The interviewees consisted of both aspiring young writers and established successful writers. The interviewees were recommended to Lee Nichols by distinguished African writers and literary experts. Lee Nichols structured the interviews as a series of conversations during which he asked questions drawn from a broad repertoire. The questions sought responses on

(a) the writers' biographical data including their educational attainments;
(b) early writing efforts and the surrounding motivating factors;
(c) the nature and purpose of their writing;
(d) the writers' sense of actual and potential audiences;
(e) use of traditional/ folkloric materials;
(f) preferred language of expression;
(g) themes and concerns in African writing;
(h) problems and challenges African writers encountered;

(i) the writers' favourite and most effective genre; and

(j) the writing process, publishing and future prospects.

The questions covered virtually all the central and critical issues and concerns of African literature. My purpose in studying Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers" was threefold:

(i) to document the similarities, differences and challenges African writers writing between the 1950s and 1970s had to contend with in their efforts at developing individual writing styles, national and continental literary identities;

(ii) to document the conception, design, content selection and programming strategies, and notions of audience held by Lee Nichols and the Voice of America in the 1970s; and

(iii) to describe the purposes, reasons and motivation behind the "Conversations with African Writers" in the context of the 1970s.

A simple preliminary categorisation of the responses by the writers interviewed in the 1970s by Lee Nichols revealed the following:

i) that their writing or storytelling was rooted in the rich oral, and to a lesser degree written, traditions that surrounded their early childhood and schooling years;

ii) that their writing talents and skills were nurtured through participation in writing/ drama clubs and associations, and drawing from historical material;

iii) their writing was motivated by the pleasure derived from narrating a good story, self awareness, and social action;

iv) to the participants, the language question which continues to vex most African writers and scholars was a controversial issue;

v) African writers since the 1960s used many media and genres and played different roles, namely: novelists, short story writers, poets, playwrights, essayists and critics;

vi) African writers writing since the 1960s encountered tremendous challenges and frustrations arising from restricted and restricting political, economic and industrial environments that prevailed in their countries. As a result they could not make a career out of writing;

vii) African writers during this decade were less concerned with the theme of cultural conflict arising from contact between African and European cultures than with gender and contemporary cultural issues.

b) Internal illustration

The internal illustration consists of the writers' comments on the topical views and issues of their time and a brief summary of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation's (KBC) radio broadcasts of literature and cultural content since the 1960s to date with emphasis on the 1970s. The 1970s were a watershed in the history of literature teaching in Kenya. In 1968, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, collaborating with other academics, spearheaded curriculum innovation at the University of Nairobi. Their efforts led to the abolition of the English Department and the creation of the Department of Literature. This new Department deliberately set out to project a Kenyan and African image and outlook. Because there was very little indigenous literature material prepared for schools, radio literature broadcasts were used to satisfy the need for indigenous content by providing oral literature materials, literary explications and criticism. I believe that a detailed descriptive account of the Kenyan use of radio to disseminate African literature will shed light on the strategies an African country adopted in content and audience selection as it tried to implement an Afrocentric literature curriculum. It is important to point out that the Voice of Kenya (VOK), the precursor to the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), rebroadcast the Lee Nichols programmes in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the literature programming to schools.

It is critical to point out that external international broadcasters have vast collections of literary and cultural communications materials on Africa. These broadcasters are well placed financially, technologically and infrastructurally to collect and disseminate such materials. However, an over-reliance on external programming may obliterate local flavours, differences and similarities. Media networks like the Cable News Network (CNN) tend to package cultural materials as if they were a homogeneous commodity for sale. However, one has to be careful not to draw simplistic ideological conclusions when discussing the globalisation (or the CNNisation) of literary and cultural materials. It is tempting to declare all externally produced broadcasts as harmful while depicting all local programmes as beneficial to the consuming audience. The citations from the BBC and VOA are an indication of the on-going ideological warfare and western imposed homogenising tendencies and pressures brought to bear on Third World countries.

Marxist criticism has demonstrated the language and historical situatedness of cultural matters. Althusser (1971) extensively discusses how power and control are functions of the prevailing ideology. Cultural theorists like Marcuse (1970) and Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) argue that the mass media tend to promote and impose a particular social system by defining and providing a descriptive and interpretive discourse within the prevailing ideological apparatus. Such pressures are resisted better when we can document and appreciate local and heterogeneous literary and cultural production as disseminated through radio. In the 1970s, the VOA through the Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers," promoted positive homogeneity in terms of a Pan-African appreciation and positive heterogeneity that reflected varied local national flavours. Lee Nichols avoided imposing a hegemonic attitude or perspective on the subject matter.

Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers" constitutes an important collection of opinions and thoughts on African literature by African writers. I hope this study will provoke discussion among and research by African writers, scholars, educators and communications specialists on the theoretical implications of dissemination of African literature and cultural content over the airwaves. Critical attention should be directed at mass media homogenisation and heterogenisation effects on African literature and cultural communication. Similarly, rigorous research should investigate how mass media targeted audiences manipulate literary and cultural materials for the satisfaction of their pragmatic needs and the formation of frames of reference used in making their social world intelligible.

Overview of the Study

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter One introduces the problem under investigation with focus on the statement of the problem, theoretical perspectives, significance of the study, delimitations, sample selection, and methodology of the study.

Chapter Two consists of a detailed description of Lee Nichols' life and work experiences, and the VOA's programming of African literature to and for Africa. Focus is placed on why and how an international/external broadcaster conceptualised, collected, processed and disseminated African literary and cultural materials to an African audience. Circumstances in which Lee Nichols worked both at the VOA's headquarters and in Africa between 1974 and 1978 provide background data that was used to establish whether or not culturally sensitive issues were taken into account in the programming process. The chapter documents the motivation behind Lee Nichols' undertaking and completing this mammoth venture. It contains a description of the strategies Lee Nichols used in carrying out the task against the background of the VOA's mandate and organisational culture.

Audience, language and intention of African writing in the decades between the 1950s and 1970s constitute the foci of Chapter Three. A brief historical description of the Kenyan literature to schools broadcasts with regard to the teaching of literature in English and English language is used to ground the writers' comments about the central role of language in audience selection and artistic creativity. Questions related to self awareness and consciousness; appropriate media and their effect on the content and style of artist production; and the relationships among the artist, the politician and their audiences are presented.

Chapter Four is a descriptive account of the issues, concerns, problems and challenges African writers perceived to be crucial in the series of programmes entitled "Conversations with African Writers." Their comments address the role and function of the artist in cultural communication and national development and the creation of artistic and literary oases in which to nurture artistic talents and skills.

Chapter Five is devoted to a description and analysis of the role of radio diffusion of literary materials and its effects on cultural communication and literary creativity. Attention is focused on the writers' comments regarding the role of reading in the home environment, oral literature in literary growth, literary criticism, local publishing, writing clubs and radio broadcasting.

Chapter Six gives an overview of the challenges, problems and opportunities open to African writing of the period between the 1950s and 1970s. These issues are analysed using the Social Construction of Reality and the Media Systems Dependency Theories. The role of both international and national radio broadcasters in the dissemination of literary and cultural communications is reviewed and suggestions for future research made.

CHAPTER TWO

LEE NICHOLS AND AFRICAN LITERATURE

Early life experiences and influences

The preceding chapter examines the influence that media have on the creation of social reality and how people will use media resources to resolve ambiguity in their social universes. The underlying implication is that media exert a powerful influence on the manner in which society manages its affairs. One way through which one could document how media processes operate is by analysing the institutional structures and the professional lives of those working in mass media institutions. In the following discussion, I seek to document the veracity of the above premise through conversations with Lee Nichols about his life and professional experiences that are relevant to the dissertation topic.

Lee Nichols and I began corresponding about his literary programmes in August of 1994. Our initial correspondence involved acquainting one another about the dissertation topic. I requested him to grant me a series of interviews which would put boundaries around our conversations. I informed him that I had prepared a detailed questionnaire to which I was seeking his response. He suggested that I post the questionnaire to him prior to our physical meeting because he needed to devote ample time to the answers. He sent me his responses well in advance of our meeting at the ALA conference in Columbus, Ohio. We held discussions over the duration of the conference and continued them in Washington DC. These conversations occurred naturally wrapping themselves around on-going events.

Our visits to the Voice of America studios were quite remarkable. Finding himself in his old workplace and meeting with colleagues and friends he had worked with for decades triggered off a flood of memories that illuminated our conversations. Incidents, events and remembrances bobbed up as our discussions unfurled. Lee Nichols informed me that he was born in 1915. His early childhood had a tremendous influence on him. During this period, he was basically brought up by his maternal grandparents whenever he was not attending boarding school. His mother, a strong personality, dominated every aspect of his life. She moved her son from one school to another each time she thought such movement would benefit him. These shifts began when he moved to his grandparents' home in Bloomington, Illinois at the age of six. At age 8 1/2, he attended a private school in Delaware, then a Quaker elementary school in Philadelphia, followed by a public elementary school in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. He proceeded to another school in Conneaut, Ohio and finally back with his grandparents in Illinois. This moving around was to become the established pattern of his early upbringing and it persisted into his early twenties.

I observed that he had spent a considerable portion of his professional life working with literature and cultural materials. I asked him to briefly describe and account for this trend and where possible relate it to the literature he may have enjoyed most in elementary school. He could hardly recall learning any significant literature or cultural material during his early schooling years. He proceeded to narrate what he considered to be significant events and influences in his formative years. He is grateful that his maternal grandfather encouraged him to master the basics of grammar, a skill that he put to very good use as a journalist. His grandfather also motivated him to learn what he calls "touch typing" which proved to be an indispensable skill in his journalistic career.

The summer before he entered junior high school his mother enrolled him in a private school where he worked on the school's newspaper. The following autumn, his mother moved him to an all-boys high school in the Bronx. At this school, he was introduced to the basics of journalism by preparing and publishing the school's weekly newspaper. His school always won a prize in the Columbia Interscholastic Press Association competitions. It was at this school that he developed the knack of doing a good job. His journalism teacher extolled Nichols and his classmates to always "Get it right."

In listening to a description of Nichols' experiences, one becomes aware of a faithfulness or a dedication to whatever he undertook to accomplish. He acknowledges that the Quaker religion played a significant role in his life since the age of 16. He was attracted to this faith by its insistence on " . . . the brotherhood of man, pacifism and non-violence, and the inner light," the latter phrase referring to the concept of God. The Quaker faith stressed the virtues of "honesty, truth and honest dealing with all mankind." Nichols feels that these values have shaped and guided his entire life's dealings for the past 64 years. Their influence is crucial when evaluating the effect they had on his interviewing of African writers or peoples and races not drawn from his own stock. His peripatetic years enabled him to become more flexible and accepting of new situations. Finding himself in different circumstances and meeting new people, coupled with his Quaker faith, gave him an opportunity to reach out, to touch others and to be touched in the process.

He volunteered at two Quaker work camps in the coal mining area of Pennsylvania. The volunteers worked on housing projects for unemployed coal miners. They also studied the underlying problems besetting the workers and the industry in general. During his teens, he spent three summers working on farms in exchange for room and board. These experiences triggered in him the desire to do something practical about the problems and challenges ordinary people encountered. They also enabled him to learn about how to interact with other people in a relationship based on trust. He settled for journalism as an appropriate channel through which to fulfil this ideal. It is also probable that these experiences gave him a glimpse into the basic concerns that preoccupy ordinary people as they struggle to make sense of their lives.

He left Pennsylvania for California where, for several months, he worked for the Napa Journal without pay, in order to gain some journalistic experience. Later in Pennsylvania, he worked for a "Negro weekly newspaper," again without a salary. He recalls getting another "job on a trade union paper in Wheeling, West Virginia - center of coal mining, steel making and other manufacturing. That was excellent experience and I worked there for several months."

I find the above accounts significant in two respects. First, he demonstrated his love of journalism by working without pay, indicating that he was ready to sacrifice anything as long as he was able to come close to the heart of the issues he had chosen to investigate. Second, these experiences opened a window of opportunity that enabled him to be genuinely involved with the lives of ordinary people. Such interaction instilled in him a desire to seek out the concerns, challenges, and possibilities in people's lives.

I asked him whether he had enrolled for any advanced courses in journalism or any writing course during his school and working life and to describe any interesting literature he may have studied in the writing programme. At the age of 24, he enrolled at Columbia University in a creative writing course in which no literature was offered. By the age of 26, his journalistic apprenticeship bore fruit, when he joined the United Press Radio in 1941 as a Radio News writer based in New York. Within a year, he had mastered how to convert stories into radio copy. This approval involved the use of shorter sentences and less detail than would appear in a newspaper account. At his request, he moved to the UP Washington DC Bureau where he spent the next 16 years as a rewrite man, editor and for a brief time, a reporter.

This was a critical period in Nichols' professional training and development. He acquired more skills in Press Association writing and editing techniques. During this period, he wrote several magazine articles and his first book, Breakthrough on the Color Front. This book is of great historic importance because it is the first authentic account of the racial integration of the United States armed forces. The book has an interesting history in that while still in manuscript form, it was read by the two Supreme Court judges who ruled on school bussing as a means of breaking the racial barriers existing in American society.

Prompted by the lack of further professional prospects and challenges, Nichols left the UP toward the end of 1958 to join the Voice of America. His Quaker religion had instilled in him a desire to be of service to mankind by attending to those social issues and concerns that preoccupy ordinary people. UP did not offer such opportunities. His first involvement with reporting about Africa began when he became the inaugural chief of the "English-to-Africa Service" in 1963. The Service had a clear mandate to "report Africa to Africa." Focus was placed on disseminating news and subjects on Africa in addition to the staple menu of news and features from and about the United States of America. The Service targeted Anglophone intellectuals and emphasised reporting contemporary events in Africa. Its programmes adopted the standard documentary format.

There was hardly any positive coverage of events occurring on the African continent at the time he set out to do the interviewing of "Conversations with African Writers." Many programmes featured development issues, art, culture and later on literature. Some of the programmes were "Voices of Africa" (a collection of speeches by famous

African men and women) and "Africa in Print" (these were African materials carried by American newspapers). The latter programme contained propaganda aimed at engendering a positive attitude among African intellectuals towards the US during the Cold War. He ran the "English-Africa Service" for about ten years until he was assigned to record the African Universities programmes. This was the beginning of the Special Projects Department within the Voice of America.

The African Universities project was a collaborative venture between the Voice of America (VOA) and the United States Information Agency (USIA). His boss, James "Jack" Logan informed him that he would have to undertake the project. Nichols protested stating that he i) knew nothing about African Universities, ii) had no skills for reporting in Africa, and iii) didn't even know how to manipulate a tape recorder.

In spite of his lack of enthusiasm, he, together with a colleague, left for the African continent in the Spring of 1971. They organised and taped a series of documentary programmes titled, "African Universities in the Seventies - Progress and Problems." The hour-long programmes covered virtually all the universities in Anglophone Africa. The project took more than two years to complete after which Logan suggested that he should consider interviewing African authors. Nichols had a "cool" attitude toward this suggestion. His reservations arose from what appears to have been a feeling of inadequacy considering that his literary training was limited to only two summer courses at the American University focusing on Anglophone and Francophone literature. His response was, "Well, if you want me to, I'll do it, but I don't see the value." Even the Assistant Director of the USIA for Africa had preferred doing programmes that had overt political aims. Nichols proposed recording feature programmes on US AID funded development projects in Africa. As a compromise, it was agreed that he "would do a few development features and experiment with African writers."

1973 found him back in Africa in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa where he was to begin the series "Conversations with African Writers." The only information he had received before his arrival was a mention of the names of two Ethiopian writers, Tsegaye Gabre-Mehdin and Mengistu Lemma.

Once in the field he had to make a number of pragmatic decisions. Since he had very little information about writers in the countries in his itinerary, he devised a method that proved effective. On arrival, he sought the advice of the literary authorities of that country. In Ethiopia, a professor of literature at the Haile Selassie I University arranged for him to interview four Ethiopian writers.[2]

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[2] Because of political considerations, the inaugural interviews with the Ethiopian writers have never been broadcast to date.

Jack Logan and the USIA head were impressed by the preliminary results of the writers experiment. Therefore, in 1974, an enlarged series of interviews with African writers was launched. Nichols once again found himself in charge of the project. No advice was given to him regarding either the writers to be interviewed, or the nature of questions he was to ask. He was given free reign to proceed as he chose. He had to begin somewhere.

He sought the advice of authorities on African literature at UCLA in California, Ezekiel Mphahlele (then at Denver), and Charles Larson at the American University in Washington DC. These consultations evolved into a plan of action that enabled him to

i) limit the scope of the interviews to Anglophone writers;
ii) obtain references about potential interviewees from literary authorities of the country in question;
iii) identify and interview both established and emerging writers whose literary works were recommended by local experts;
iv) interview both female and male writers; and
v) interview writers producing works in indigenous languages.

His earlier personal experiences, professional training and work experiences had adequately prepared him for the mammoth task of tracking down African writers both on the continent and in North America and holding conversations with them. The motivation behind the conversations was to encourage cultural communication among African countries, with the Voice of America facilitating that interaction. The intention was to create an awareness among African audiences of their great cultural and historical heritage. Logan explained that it

> was Murrow's theory and I certainly subscribed to it, and that is, that a nation that takes pride in its own culture, a people that takes pride in its own culture, believes in its own artistic merits, its accomplishments, its own artists, and who take pride in them, would have pride in themselves and in building a nation. That may sound a little farfetched, but you have your own artistic elements, in order to establish yourself as a nation, and take pride in your own country including its political and economic status.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995)

The VOA wanted to demonstrate to its vast African audience that the United States respected their diverse cultures to the extent that it expended both human and financial resources to this end. This argument proved popular with the top officials at the VOA who approved funding Nichols over the years.

The idea of interviewing African writers as a means of getting into the heart of their societies is a very good one. A people's history and culture are usually expressed by their creative artists and writers. Anyone who desires to enter into a culture's very soul could do so by reading the myths, fables, stories and narratives the society has created about itself. Such stories embody particular metaphors and images that are understood by members of that society. The two courses in Anglophone and Francophone literature which Nichols took at the American University formed his entire formal study of African literature. These courses introduced him to the works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Camara Laye among other prominent African writers at the time. When asked to describe and account for the images and perceptions he had about Africa prior to the African writers project, Nichols said:

> That is a big question. I had believed for a long time that Africans, like African Americans, were equal in intelligence and abilities to any other people on earth. I had felt a tremendous warmth and excitement, partly in connection with my involvement with the African output from the VOA and USIA, at the surge of African independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I had travelled to Africa as a USIA reporter accompanying G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa under J. F. Kennedy, and knew his attitude of support for African control of their own countries' destinies. There was a memorable private meeting between Williams and several European missionaries in Eastern Africa in which the missionaries had told Williams, with utmost sincerity, that they felt the Africans were not ready, not prepared, for independence. Williams' reply to them was that the Africans had a *right* to rule themselves, whether they were ready or not. It was one of the strongest expressions of a people's right to self-rule that I have ever heard and I am sure it added to my feeling in that direction.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995)

This quotation is important in contextualising and understanding Nichols' frame of mind and his subsequent behaviour. Western journalists and media in general have been accused of biased and prejudiced reporting each time they present stories about non-Caucasian peoples. A casual reading of Western literature that attempts to depict other races and especially the African is rife with negative stereotypical accounts. In fact, these unwholesome narratives led to cultural renaissance in Africa and the so called Third World nations, culminating in the call for the New World Information and Communication Order debate between 1973 to 1985. The above remarks serve to categorically show how Nichols, from the very beginning, avoided appropriating the ready-made frame of reference of both the media he worked for and his society as he interacted with African peoples.

Over subsequent years, Nichols gradually expanded his repertoire of images and metaphors about Africa. He interviewed some of the leading African sculptors and artists when he worked for the USIA's press service. The high quality of their work left a lasting positive impression on him. He also had the opportunity to meet some of the outstanding African statesmen and thinkers like presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia to mention only a few. His interaction with African peoples involved other segments of social life more than just those in politics.

He successfully completed the African Universities project which brought him into contact with the intellectual and literary elite in

English-speaking Africa. The Universities project in particular made him aware of the efforts instituted in African universities and educational systems to evolve curricula relevant to the needs and aspirations of African peoples. He recalls African students telling him, "We don't want to study Chaucer and Shakespeare, we want to study our own (African) writers." At about the same time, he produced a special three-hour long series of programmes that combined African literature, drama, music and poetry obtained from various literary and musical sources in Africa. He emphasised that there was also some input from literary authorities like "Zeke" Mphahlele and an American musicologist whose identity he kept anonymous. It would be fair to say that his perceptions of Africa developed to a large extent from this immersion in African literature, drama and music. He reminisces, "I acquired a tremendous respect for African culture from that series."

Human interaction often involves or leads to a change among the participants. I asked Nichols whether his perceptions about African peoples and culture had changed and he unequivocally said:

> These perceptions became stronger as I continued to report African writers' and scientists' views and lives. I learned, both through the interviews and collateral study of African history and culture in post-graduate studies at the American University that Africa had a rich and great history in the fields of science, higher education, literature and culture. This made my previous perceptions deeper and stronger.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995)

The most striking thing about this account is how Nichols, an outsider, through real life experiences and academic study was able to enter into a different world with a minimum of bias and prejudice against the subject or object under his gaze. I find a significant correlation between his early formative experiences, his religion and the open-mindedness that accompanied his journalism. He managed to bridge gaps between peoples and cultures and presented the world with a wealth of literary and cultural materials that open doors into these other "hidden worlds."

Methodology

Before a discussion of the final conversations that were broadcast, it is appropriate to account for how Nichols undertook the assignment. I asked him about the "methodology" that he used in conducting the conversations. He dismissed my question as being inappropriate conceptually. He did not set out to collect any data! All he wanted was to produce good programmes for radio with the writers' presence being felt by the audience. The intent was to facilitate direct communication with the audience. I observed that the title, "Conversations with African Writers," was curious. He told me that he selected a deliberately vague title because he did not want to be tied down to any specifics in terms of the writers' identities or the contents of the conversations.

In response to the question why he had selected to interview writers and not any other group dealing with cultural matters he said the topic was the Voice of America's idea of a good radio programme. Later, there was another programme that detailed the work and lives of African scientists. He had many interesting ideas about feature programming on Africa but his superiors in the VOA were not keen to expand his type of work. He also interviewed other opinion leaders like university professors, administrators and Ministry of Education officials. The broad repertoire of his programmes forestalls accusations of undue bias toward literature and cultural materials.

All that he had in way of preparation for embarking on the conversations were a tape recorder, tapes and assured access to United States Information Services personnel in each country he visited. These personnel were to help him with the practical modalities of identifying the local literary authorities. He then visited the literary authorities who suggested names of potential interviewees. At the end of each day, he would rank the writers indicating which among them had been mentioned most by the authorities. Nichols' list of potential interviewees categorised authors as outstanding writers, emerging writers, women writers, and writers using indigenous languages. He also grouped the writers according to the genres in which they preferred to work. After these preliminaries were complete, Nichols would contact individual writers to set up appointments for the interviews.

He explained that because of time and other constraints, he did not have the opportunity to read the writers' work or any biographical materials about them in advance. An advantage to this seeming unpreparedness is that it gave him flexibility to manoeuvre according to the prevailing circumstances. A disadvantage is that he did not have the opportunity to ask specific questions that would enable him and his listeners to delve into the fictive world of imagination and enthralling wonder captured in the works of the individual writers. However, listening to the tapes reveals that this approach gave the writers freedom to comment on their work highlighting their concerns, challenges and opportunities. I asked Nichols to describe as closely as possible what was involved in the actual interviewing process. His reply:

> Well, first to find a comfortable location with little noise (a real problem in Africa) and a relaxed atmosphere, often my hotel room, with at times an offer of a drink to my prospective interviewees. Then put them at their ease as well as possible; get their voice "level" on my tape recorder; start with a few simple things like, "Pronounce your name for me," important in many cases because I had to say the name on the air and I wanted to be as authentic as possible; "When and where were you born?" And then on to more substantive questions. I had to hold the microphone at the proper angle in front of the writer, and move it in front of my mouth when I wanted to pose another question, or interrupt for a comment; and I had to watch the meter to

> make sure the volume was recording properly. I had also to be alert to ask for clarifications on some answers, or to switch to further questions that seemed appropriate. In other words I had to be *in control* of the process, while allowing the writer to expound his answers fully.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995)

This account indicates that Nichols attended to the physical and psychological comfort of the writers. By ensuring the existence of a conducive atmosphere, he was able to manipulate the situation to the advantage of both the interviewee and himself. He emphasises that he had to be in control of the process. This raises the question of whether or not the writers were telling their own story in their individual voices. Any conversation is by nature a dialogue between speakers who try to find an appropriate level in their interrogation of the topic under discussion. I asked Nichols whether he provided adequate content and contexts in which the interviews occurred? Put differently, did he engage in "face value transmission" in the interviews? A close listening to the interviews reveals that his selection and diffusion were done in a judicious manner. The writers spoke their minds and made reference to their works with minimal commentary from him. They used images, metaphors, discourse strategies and narratives drawn from their respective societies. The writers have vibrant voices that capture the topical concerns of their times. Their migrant words move the listeners from place to place and from one world into another. The writers had opportunity to express themselves freely within the confines of the conversation. I asked Nichols to comment on the role and effect his interviewing methods and styles might have had on the individuality of voice among the writers and the divergent worlds they presented. He said, "I simply presented the writers' description of their works and their world views, in their own words; let the audience listen and find out for itself."

He used this interviewing format for virtually all the interviews. Among the set of questions he had was a question on whether the writers considered themselves and their work as belonging to Pan-Africanist writing in a global context. There were so many negative and non-committal responses that he stopped asking this question. It is not easy to account for the writers' negative responses because most of them addressed the issues of identity and self image in the colonial and neo-colonial structures in their countries. In addition, the interviews were rebroadcast by many African radio stations for use in their schools' literature programmes promoting a Pan-Africanist world view. There are two plausible explanations behind the rebroadcasting of the Lee Nichols literary programmes: (i) that because many African people were not well informed about what their counterparts in the African diaspora were doing, rebroadcasting the programmes was deemed to be one of many channels of encouraging a Pan-Africanist sensibility; (ii) that planners decided to rebroadcast the programmes with the intention of providing information that audiences would appropriate for use as well as supplying literature materials for their school systems.

Product Preparation

"Conversations with African Writers" consists of 78 interviews with African writers which were broadcast by the Voice of America. Each interview took a minimum of two hours of taped conversations. It was neither necessary nor desirable to broadcast them verbatim. Programming needs at the VOA dictated what could be aired. Similarly, not everything said was useful or relevant to the questions posed and the purposes of the broadcasts. I asked Nichols to explain the process he used in setting boundaries around the contents of the final broadcast material. The first thing that he did was to listen to the taped interviews following their year of recording. (I have to point out that these interviews had taken about four years to record!) He would then make a succinct summary of the major points the writers made in response to the main questions. This allowed him to make commentary on the main issues under discussion. He paraphrased brief and routine responses and voiced them during the broadcasts. He also paraphrased and voiced all the biographical information concerning his interviewees. I think that Lee Nichols' narrative gained authenticity by virtue of presenting the material as a first hand account.

The next step involved selecting the interviews to be processed and transcribing them on his typewriter. This was followed by making a summary of the central points of the interview and organising them into what seemed to be an appropriate sequence that followed the question-and-answer pattern used during the actual interviewing. His reliance on internal logic and on memory of the interviews consolidated the veracity of the dialogues. He reflected on each transcript in order to find an appropriate title. He also focused on interesting dimensions of each interview ensuring that each programme was distinct from another. By so doing, he was able to sustain audience interest. He processed the transcripts into scripts consisting of his narration, inserts from the taped interviews and segments from the writers' works. For studio purposes, he blocked out in transparent ink portions of the transcripts he intended to use in the programme. He cut out all such segments from the tape in the appropriate sequence, inserting blank tape between the segments. In cases where writers had read their own works, Nichols used the excerpts as long as they were of broadcast quality and if not, he would use a studio voice substitute or read them himself. For a variety of reasons, most of the writers' works were not read or performed during the actual interviewing process. He made some of the selections long after the interviews had taken place. This process occurred with or without the writers' help.

During the actual studio recording, he read his narration, allowing for interruption for the playing of the taped inserts and/ or readings. The programmes were designed to last 29 minutes and 30 seconds. They had a formal opening, with an introduction read by a studio announcer and a signature tune or theme music. The programmes had a break half way at which point the topic or focus of the on-going interview was reintroduced. The studio announcer would read the ending to the programme and announce the focus of the next one. The final editing consisted of Nichols listening to the entire recording, editing for "bugs" and making any necessary cuts that would reduce the time to 30 minutes. In two or three instances, he had to use voice substitution. For example, voice substitution had to be used for the inaugural Ethiopian interviews because of the difficult Ethiopian English accent of the inteviewees. He followed the same processing procedure for all the interviews in the series. He made a transcription of the interviews, wrote out the programmes and indicated the excerpts he intended to use. Copies of the relevant portions were sent to the writers for vetting. The writers were free to edit the materials sent to them. I pointed out to him that some writers might have taken offence at this intrusion into their words and worlds. He informed me that he never received any complaint from the writers with regard to his editorial function.

The point of this discussion is that editing is an essentially subjective process. As a reporter, Nichols gathered "data" by selecting and rejecting items he considered relevant or irrelevant to his particular needs. Bantz *et al.* (1980) identify the following five elements in censorship or the gatekeeping process. These are: (i) ideation (ii) job assignment (iii) materials collection (iv) editing and (v) live broadcasting. Nichols was involved in all five stages of the process which began with an idea that developed into a story line and finally into a narrative. He selected the interviewees and developed broad topics around which he framed the conversations. He was assigned the job of travelling to Africa, Canada and the United States to make the preliminary inquiries about the writer interviews. He fulfilled the third dimension of gathering the subject matter for the programmes by conducting the interviews. The preparation, studio recording and final presentation are aspects of Bantz *et al.*'s functions four and five which he performed.

Nichols denies harbouring any negative preconceived ideas about his subjects and objects of inquiry. His function was to communicate materials gathered from writers who had a purpose in wanting their messages heard. (I discuss the content of the writers' conversations in detail in Chapter Three.) He did not promote a particular view or orientation about the materials he collected. This neutrality of perspective was in conformity with the VOA's desire to be perceived as a "non-partisan" and disinterested participant. However, this statement does not negate the fact that inherent in the editor/ producer and audience relationship ferment the central issues of power and control. How did he handle this latent tension? One explanation could be found in his formative experiences and extensive professional journalistic training. In "Conversations with African Writers," he shows sensitivity to the principles of timeliness, importance attached to the critical issues of the times, and proximity to his interviewees (in terms of interest in the content of the interviews). His audience consisted of English speaking Africa, he said, ". . . all literate (or orally literate) English-speaking Africans, down to the elementary school level and even uneducated Africans, and to the highest levels, were within the scope of my (our) target audience." His work was made easier by the advice he received from the literary authorities and writers in each country he toured.

This assignment involved many people and issues. An analysis of the relationship between the collector, the subjects and the materials would make very interesting research. The interactions form a web of variants which necessarily influence each other in profound ways. The Pokomo peoples of Kenya say, *"Whenever one finger draws oil, the others ultimately become greasy as well."* This adage prompted me to ask Nichols whether the material contained in the conversations had any relevance to him? He said:

> Very definitely . . . all of it! I saw new worlds, cultures, values in all the writers I interviewed; this broadened my world and especially African view; it taught me much about African cultures, ways of thinking, values, etc., that I did not learn in my formal university African Studies; and it moved me deeply in several ways not the least of which was the opportunity it afforded me to bring such rich treasures to Africa-wide audiences and world-wide as well since our broadcasts could be heard all over the world, though they were beamed principally to Africa.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995)

Not only did Nichols embark on a geographical journey throughout the African landscape, he also undertook an imaginative journey as he travelled with the writers into their special worlds. Through this intimate interaction with the people, writers and their works, he came to a deep understanding of the central issues and concerns of the writers and their time. This involvement changed him in many ways. He came to regard the best of African literature as ranking very highly among world literatures. The writers were talented and showed a keen perception of

> . . . their cultures' past status and reality, of their countries' present problems and strengths, and - as stated by many of the writers I interviewed - a vital role in helping their countries . . .

> governments and people define their status in the world and the routes to their futures. And many, many impressions of the generosity of the writers, to me as a *ferengi* interloper, their kindness and generosity as people, and their willingness to share their visions with their fellow Africans and the world. I'm sure many of them regretted the fact that my programs about them were not beamed to the American audience - I wrote my book African Writers at the Microphone partly to respond to that disappointment and what I considered a challenge.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995.)

The broadcasts flung far and wide the seed germ of African literature which found fertile soil on the continent and even in North America.[3] I asked Nichols about his assessment of the effect of this diffusion. He said he had a feeling of tremendous achievement. His work is indeed a milestone in that the VOA published 26 of the 83 interviews under the title Conversations with African Writers, 20,000 copies of which were distributed world-wide through the USIS offices in Africa, Europe and Asia. This dissertation is based on the 83 interviews. Similarly, many African radio stations rebroadcast the entire series of "Conversations with African Writers." Some countries did this more than once. While conducting the interviews, many African students told him that they had listened to the programmes which they enjoyed tremendously. In March of 1995, I attended the 21st African Literature Association Conference (ALA) in Columbus, Ohio where I met distinguished African and Africanist scholars who confirmed that they had used the programmes in their teaching of African literatures. They found the writers' comments on their art a valuable teaching resource in view of the appalling lack of such teaching materials in the 1970s. The only sense of regret Nichols has relates to not being able to cover works by Francophone, Lusophone, Arabic and Somali writers. However, a redeeming feature is that he recorded interviews on work written in Kiswahili, Hausa, Yoruba and Acoli among many other African languages. It was impossible for him not to be positively influenced by the material that he gathered, prepared, and disseminated over radio. It is highly probable that the African audiences that listened to the materials were influenced in a similar manner.

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[3] In recognition of Lee Nichols' pioneering monumental work, the Stephen Arnold family through an endowment at the University of Alberta established in 1992 the Fonlon-Nichols Annual Prize awarded by the African Literature Association (ALA) in recognition of literary excellence to an outstanding writer of African descent.

The Editorial Function and Institutional Structure

Speech Act Theory suggests participants in a conversation negotiate for meanings and interpretations. Accordingly, it is not possible for one involved in a speech act to receive all the anticipated responses because participants make responses that may be contrary to the speaker's expectations. Bearing this in mind, I asked Nichols to discuss this aspect of speech restricting his answer to instances in which writers made unexpected comments about their own countries while discussing their works. He explained:

> In the case of countries with which we had friendly relations, I might have to soften such criticisms of their own government. I don't remember *any* such, offhand (in a later interview, not for the series but broadcast by the VOA, I did soften a Somali writer's criticism of that country's government, but I had been given his advanced permission to do so. I did not eliminate the criticism entirely . . . just softened it slightly). In the case of South Africa, in my interview with Bessie Head, since the US government was hostile to the South African government, I had no problem with leaving her criticisms in. Same with Ugandan Okot p'Bitek: we were then very hostile toward the Idi Amin regime. As I said earlier we didn't air the Ethiopian interviews at all. It was not that they (the Ethiopians) were hostile to their government, - one or two were in part - but by the time I would have been ready to broadcast them, Haile Selassie had been overthrown, there was a new revolutionary regime in power and the USIS in Addis Ababa recommended that we not air those interviews. I am not sure of all their reasons, but one was that they might endanger the writers. I perhaps might have fought vigorously to air the interviews . . . they were good, literarily . . . but being a good government servant, I accepted the USIS recommendation. I still have the tapes of the original interviews in my possession. They are bequeathed to Stephen Arnold and will eventually be available to scholars.
>
> (Lee Nichols, Washington DC, March, 1995)

Three important issues arise out of this citation, (i) self-censorship, (ii) institutional and governmental censorship, and (iii) writers as the critical voices of their societies. All three demonstrate the vibrancy of speech or, put differently, the power of address. The three sites of agency use the power of address to different ends. It would appear Nichols had to be careful not only not to alienate and endanger the writers, but also to ensure that his superiors would still support the project and that he would be guaranteed a listening audience. As an outsider, in fact - a guest, he could not afford to appear partisan to the African governments and the multifarious audiences. Therefore, he had to pay close attention to the pragmatic realities that confronted him especially with reference to media ownership and use. Those that control media will definitely dictate the ideological orientation of those media. This control in most cases is founded on the financial power owners exercise over media.

Censorship takes many forms which at times are difficult to detect. Newspaper, radio and television editors and producers have immense power in the gatekeeping process. While processing material for broadcast, these agents often reduce, rewrite, or shelve any story they do not like without ever referring to the reporter. In this study, Nichols is the reporter, editor and presenter. He said his superiors had given him complete autonomy with regard to content selection and what to broadcast as long as it was within the VOA Charter. "Conversations with African Writers" was used by the VOA to retain audience interest and listenership with regard to news and information broadcasting to Africa. African content was evidence that the US was concerned about the well being of the peoples of Africa. This is one way in which international broadcasting was used to fulfil the diplomacy function. The fact that the Voice Of America broadcasts in 46 languages world-wide shows the centrality of the diplomacy function. Nichols catered both to his institution's and audiences' needs and interests. The audiences must have perceived the broadcasts as a means of cultural continuity, that is, the transmission of their practices, norms and values.

Editors and producers exercise certain degrees of freedom as long as their employers approve of their work. One probable explanation could be that editors and their bosses function in the same environment drawing upon a shared frame of reference. In a general sense they could be defined as having a similar worldview that exhibits minimum ideological disjuncture. Therefore many editors can not claim to be free agents. They serve the interests of the organisation that employs them. Edward R. Murrow, former Director of the USIA, once said that media executives made "the final and crucial decisions having to do with news and public matters" (cited in New York Times Book Review). No matter how hard Nichols may have tried to be his own man, his dependent position demanded compliance from him. It then became a question of an editor working within bounds. Parenti (40) says, " . . . editors are more frequently the conduits of, rather than resisters to, owner's censorship. . . . Journalistic competence is measured in part by one's ability to cover things from an ideologically acceptable perspective, defined as 'balanced' and 'objective.'" Parenti identifies an editor's self-censorship as anticipatory avoidance. Over time, this censorship becomes so insidious that editors often times are unaware of it.

Lee Nichols and the Voice of America

In becoming involved with Africa, Nichols was not acting on his own volition. Both consciously and subconsciously, he became an ambassador of the VOA, an international American radio broadcaster who had very specific goals and intentions regarding the reasons for broadcasting to the world. He belonged to an institutional framework that had clearly defined rules and codes of behaviour. A description of the relationship between journalists and the organisations they work for sheds light on the pragmatic realities the principle actors have to fulfil in the course of carrying out their roles. In addition to the written rules and regulations, institutions have evolved specific cultures that remain unwritten yet members adhere to them as long as they remain active members of those institutions. Organisational behaviour has documented that some of the unwritten codes find expression through peer group behaviour and pressure to conform to the practises of the institution.

International radio broadcasters have disseminated literary and cultural materials to other cultures for a variety of purposes including commercial and ideological ones. Various studies regarding why people communicate indicate that there is a subjective relationship among the content of communication, the media facilitating communication and the communicants. These three dimensions influence each other in the process of creating reality. Ong (1967) argues that the advent of the printing press caused a disjuncture between known knowledge and the knower, that is, the possessor of knowledge. In oral/aural societies, the knower had an intimate relationship to the known. The printing press turned knowledge into an object of contemplation rather than one that was intimately experienced in an interactive, participatory manner (Donald Lowe 1982). The objectification of the known necessarily requires a selection and shaping process that is dictated to by the medium of expression. The selection and shaping processes present the consumer or receiver of the communication with images and narratives couched in specific vocabulary and forms. The consumer in turn uses the descriptive vocabulary to define and interpret the object under discussion. The process of description and the subsequent interpretation of observed phenomenon is prone to ambiguity because of its context situatedness and inter-subjectiveness. Media studies have interrogated the faithfulness of a *re-production* or *re-pre-sent-ation* of a phenomenon and suggested that the processes almost inevitably involve interpretation.

Obsession with the idea of objectivity of description has its origins in the natural sciences. There seems to be an underlying assumption that once a description is perceived to be scientific, then it is objective and therefore it attains a truth value in the physical or lived world. Mass media practitioners have tried to appear scientific by presenting the concept of objectivity as the cornerstone of their practice. In this study, I take the position that mass media by nature are used to construct and re-construct meanings, interpretations and social reality. The process is highly subjective in which the interpretants necessarily manipulate both the denotative and connotative dimensions of words as they negotiate through the maze of possible meanings latent in any communicative situation. A casual examination of affixation processes in language reveals how words change their categories and meanings as they enter and weave out of any communicative context. Attempts at describing phenomena, it seems, involve the *pre-sent-tation* of *re-interpretations* which are presented to the hearer as reality. The hermeneutic practice bears significant implications to the broader process of mass communication where symbolic means are used to interpret events and experiences. Roland Barthes (1972) eloquently argues that the mass media use images and metaphors inherent in the "mythic structures" of their societies to communicate meaning. This means that mass media practitioners consciously, unconsciously and subconsciously promote the prevailing ideology of their time (Althusser 1971). Mass media are both instrumental and indispensable in shaping our ideas, values, perceptions, and interpretations of the world we inhabit. Radio broadcasting like any other mass medium continues to re-work old images and create new images, metaphors and narratives that society appropriates in its daily functions. Radio communication is used to construct both positive and negative perceptions about events and their subsequent interrelations. All experience is mediated and transformed in the process of communication. Nichols' descriptive account of his work reveals the principle dimensions involved in information processing and gatekeeping. It also shows the strategies an individual producer employed in his efforts to remain faithful to the subject matter and his audiences.

Power and Control Dimensions in Information Processing

The key question to consider is the role Nichols played in aiding or subverting institutional power and control over its clientele. Some researchers have shown that reporters' work is moulded by the institution that employs them. The critical concern in this dissertation is to determine the extent to which institutional policies and practices influenced the content and style of the final version of "Conversations with African Writers" broadcast world-wide. This could be stated to read, "To what extent do the writers retain agency of voice and utterance?" Speech Act Theory indicates that one cannot ignore the question of power and control in a speech situation and how these two dimensions interact in the formation of a sense of self and the other. This is important because control of speech acts will determine the type of definition and manner of inscription of the agents involved in them.

I consider communication to be a major element in human identity, consciousness and culture. Media control and the critical role media play in disseminating information may reveal how the process determines the formation or retardation of a people's consciousness. Yet, there seems to be a tendency among many development funding agencies, educational, economic, political and even social institutions to downplay the important role that culture plays in a people's self-definition, identity and social affiliations. Research findings in media studies show that the creation, processing and provision of information by media has profound consequences on the "intra-personal, interpersonal and socio-cultural communication processes" (Reuben and

Kim, 1983:1). Earlier studies in Communication and Development theory promoted the idea that Western communication to Less Developed Countries would engender economic development and democratisation of these emergent nation states (McClelland, 1961; Pye, 1963; and Schramm, 1964). The process involved promoting capitalism as the panacea to economic well being with Less Developed Countries encouraged to emulate the West through the consumption of market economy goods and services. The alienated elite in Less Developed Countries were singled out as the prime moving force behind the envisaged economic revolution and social transformation. Perhaps this wholesale aping of the West led to the pervasive influence of media in the educational, communications, entertainment, artistic, legal and scientific institutions of Third World Countries.

Cornel West (1992) in his discussion of this issue goes further to state that the Academy is an accomplice in the legitimisation of the control of intellectual and cultural institutions in a society. However, research, as will be shown, suggests that such control is limited by

i) the latent subversive nature of power relations within institutions and between individuals working in them, and

ii) the dialogical nature of communication which generates multiple interpretations and consequences.

Althusser (1971) extensively discusses how power and control are functions of the prevailing ideology in a society. Other cultural theorists like Marcuse (1970) and Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) argue that the mass media have tended to promote and impose a particular social system by defining and providing a descriptive and interpretative apparatus to society. Stuart Hall (1978) extends the argument further by stating that the mass media by nature cannot define reality, but that it is their relationship to the power and control structures in their society that becomes the key issue. Nichols set out to produce programming approved by the VOA. At the same time, the programmes gave African writers fora at which they articulated their voices. He operated in an environment that required the mediation of diverse power relations. How did he fulfil these requirements?

Parenti (1993) suggests that media power and control find expression through the following agencies: i) owners, ii) advertisers, iii) editors, iv) reporters exercising self-censorship, and v) the dominant culture. Control of media is a serious issue because through consistent selective exposure, media implant and recycle stock images and perceptions to the extent that the recipients develop particular pre-dispositions toward the phenomena being disseminated. Masmoudi (1978) makes succinct comments regarding the manner in which the

West creates a particular type of social reality about Third World countries and the exercise of power and control of media resources when he says:

> Current events in the developing countries are reported to the world via the transnational media; at the same time, these countries are kept "informed" of what is happening abroad through the same channels. By transmitting to the developing countries only news processed by them, that is, news which they have filtered, cut and distorted, the transnational media impose their own way of seeing the world upon the developing countries. As a result, communities geographically close to each other sometimes learn about each other only via these transnational systems. Moreover, the latter often seek to present these communities . . . when indeed they do show interest in them . . . in the most unfavourable light, stressing crises, strikes, street demonstrations, putsches, etc. or even holding them up to ridicule. If and when the press in the industrialised countries does present the Third World's problems, achievements and aspirations in an objective light, it does so in the form of special supplements or issues, for which high rates of payment are charged.
>
> (Masmoudi 4)

Alongside media, the family, community, work place, peer group and the school socialise individuals into the prevailing ideology. Parenti (1993:24) says "'. . . the media set the limits of public discourse - they create opinion visibility, giving legitimacy to certain views and illegitimacy to others."[4]

Media ownership and control raise the question of the purposes and ends to which such media are put. This area remains problematic to most Third World countries. This was demonstrated by the UNESCO debate on the New World Information and Communications Order that preoccupied the world for a period of 12 years. Governments and politicians in most Less Developed Countries (LDCs) are the primary beneficiaries of media by virtue of the ownership and control they exert over them. Schiller in Communication and Cultural Domination (1976) has shown the West is the main source and supplier of programming materials, equipment and technology to Third World communications systems and networks - a situation which endows the West with tremendous power over and control of the cultural productions in Less Developed Countries. This colossal influence extends to the content of the programmes. The reason behind this anomalous situation is that the vast majority of the Less Developed Countries do not have the necessary human and material resources to undertake the production of culturally sensitive materials, programming and effective manning of national broadcasting systems and networks. Consequently, they are not able to vigorously counteract negative representation of their culture conducted by foreign agencies. Masmoudi (1978) documents that Less Developed Countries are dependent on Western transnational media networks for most of their media requirements. Transnational companies wield tremendous power because of the vast economies of scale in their production systems. Such dependency has led to cultural imperialism (Schiller 1976) in that Less Developed Countries are forced to disseminate fare that originates from and is undergirded by Western (primarily American) economic, political, ideological and cultural thinking. Schiller argues further that:

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[4] In subsequent chapters, I discuss this function relating it to the writers' comments regarding the crucial concerns of their day.

> Communication, it needs to be said, includes much more than messages and the recognisable circuits through which the message flows. It defines social reality and thus influences the organisation of work, the character of technology, the curriculum of the educational system, formal and informal, and the use of "free time" actually, the basic arrangements of living.
>
> (Schiller 1976)

The Voice of America Charter and Operations

The foregoing discussion of how power and control dimensions operate in media and the creation of symbolic reality will help contextualise the description and analysis of the Voice of America's Charter and the implications it had on Nichols' work. The description is important because it sheds light on the functioning of the institution and the effects it has on the reporters, editors and the final product.

Lee Nichols worked for the Voice of America (VOA) from 1958 to 1985 covering a period of twenty seven years. In retirement, he continues as an occasional freelancer to cover African literary matters for the VOA. The Voice of America, founded in 1942, is a leading global radio broadcasting channel through which the American government reaches a global audience in excess of 100 million listeners in 46 languages on a weekly basis. The VOA operates both short-wave and medium wave transmitters world-wide as well as having a web site on the Internet. Early in 1994, the VOA began a phone in service for its global audiences. In addition, its programming is carried by over 1100 AM and FM affiliate stations world-wide. On a daily basis, the VOA produces between 100-150 original stories excluding interviews and development documentaries covering Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The VOA's activities are guided by a Charter drafted in 1960 and signed into law in 1976. The Charter has three specific principles:

(1) VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.

(2) VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American Society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.

(3) VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.

The first principle states that the organisation will strive to achieve accuracy, objectivity and comprehensiveness in its news and information coverage and dissemination. The VOA uses the Charter to create and sustain an image of a news and information gathering agency that is faithful to its mission. Given the immense power of the United States in the post Cold War era, it appears that the Voice of America will have increased prominence and power which could easily be utilised in smothering all non-American perspectives. When I conducted interviews with the Voice of America officials and section heads in Washington DC, they emphasised two points. First, that the VOA has not been, is not and will never be a propaganda tool of the United States government. Second, that the VOA will be accurate, objective, comprehensive and credible in its news and information gathering and dissemination functions.

Moffett's study entitled Voice of America News: An Organizational Study of its Struggle for Objectivity is an historical examination of the Voice of America's claim to objectivity in its news gathering and dissemination functions since its inception in 1942. Moffett documents that despite the VOA being the official foreign policy implementation organ of the United States government, the Voice of America has managed to withstand external political manipulation through the enforcement of the VOA Charter. The Charter makes the Voice of America the only government agency which is required by law to present objective news. Through the Charter, the VOA has instituted rigorous stipulations guarding against internal prejudices, and stringent gate-keeping mechanisms and restrictions which determine what the various language services are permitted to transmit. Moffett also documents that staff adherence to professionalism ensures objectivity. He found out that the internal safeguards were very effective in controlling distortions but he cautions against likely government interference through its appointment of the VOA's managerial staff. The first principle in the VOA Charter is contradicted by the fact that the VOA's autonomy is limited by its parent organisation the USIA, which has a Foreign Services biased staff. Nemecek's dissertation entitled Speaking of America: The Voice of America, Its Mission and Message confirms Moffett's claim concerning political interference. Nemecek points out that journalistic, diplomatic and political interests conflict making the VOA vulnerable to external interference. She identifies and accounts for this Achilles' heel by tracing its existence to the political influence exerted on the VOA during the Kennedy, Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan administrations. The point I am making is that it is very difficult for a government funded and staffed institution to maintain its freedom from interference by the funding agency.

Even if it were possible to overcome external interference, some form of internal interference is likely to occur. Recent research findings have begun to interrogate the notions of objectivity and truth with regard to phenomena in general. Wasburn (1992) in a thorough analysis of

International Radio Broadcasting (IRB) shows that radio broadcasting has been used for political propaganda and the construction of symbolic reality that is beneficial to the source broadcasting nation. I should add that the use of radio to achieve overtly political ends has been supplanted in the West by television. However, radio broadcasting continues to play a significant role in the lives of millions of people in the rest of the world. International broadcasters disseminate political ideas, perspectives and information with the intention of achieving specific goals among their global audiences. Questions of truth or falsehood are basically problematic because any *re-pre-sent-ation* is context and culture specific. Meaning is dependent on the stock phrases - the givens in the language of communication. The particular context of the realisations or articulations of these meanings are an end-result of the tussle between and among the varied perceptions and ideas the participants hold.

The second principle of the VOA Charter stresses that the VOA will present significant American thought and institutions. It is important to note that the agency's sole reason for existence is to disseminate news, information, educational and entertainment materials to foreign audiences. By law, it is illegal for the VOA to broadcast to the American public. It is then curious that a major world news and information agency would be created to cater to foreigners or foreign interests. The question then is, "Why is the VOA in business?" Or more succinctly, "What is the business of the VOA?"

In order to explicate the second principle of the Charter and find an answer to the question above, it is best to determine the thinking of the administration at the Voice of America. Geoffrey Cowan, the director of the VOA, in a speech entitled "The Voice of America After the Cold War: Moving Radio from Monologue to Dialogue," reiterates that the VOA is not a propaganda tool of the United States government. He lists six priority areas that constitute one of the many VOA missions in a changing global environment:

a) to provide essentials news, information and cultural programming. This function is carried out in countries like China, Nigeria, (Central Africa), Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Cuba and Haiti;
b) to help the world come to understand the United States - promote a positive image of the USA;
c) to help the world understand American values and institutions namely democracy, capitalism and human rights;
d) to educate their listeners through VOA programming on science, business, English as a Second language, health, etc.;
e) to explain American policy ranging from trade to human rights to the global audience; and finally
f) to promote American culture and tourism.

The above items are an expansion of three principles in the VOA Charter. They clearly show the VOA's primary purpose is to persuade listeners to ascribe to American ideological, economic, and cultural orientations and perspectives. "Conversations with African Writers" programmes were used by the VOA to sustain listener interest in the main news and information programmes of the Voice of America (items a, b, and c of Cowan's priority list). African content engendered the view that the United States was concerned about the well-being of the African peoples.

The Voice of America has an audience of over 100 million people world-wide who tune into the broadcasts every week. There are two plausible reasons for the VOA's phenomenal audience reach and retention. First, it is likely that radio networks in the target countries may have failed to provide adequate programming content for their citizens. The failure arises out of (a) a scarcity of radio stations and (b) authoritarian centralised control of the few radio and television networks that exist in most Less Developed Countries. As a result, many citizens feel they have limited access and exposure to different and differing sources of information and perspectives (Principle 2 of the VOA Charter and item {a} on Cowan's list). Second, the VOA broadcasts its programmes in 46 languages world-wide. The VOA planners and implementors are cognisant of the pivotal role indigenous languages play in maintaining or changing social relations and structures in society.

With specific reference to African countries, the language question remains problematic because of intra and inter national multilingualism. Most African governments are unable to promote local languages because of limited financial resources. Some countries consider it politically expedient to promote foreign languages especially when there are several competing indigenous languages that have large populations. Some African governments prefer this approach in the hope that it would enhance national unity and inter-ethnic harmony. Consequently some of these language groups tune into international broadcasting for news and other programming because they perceive their governments' provision of information inadequate. International broadcasters often do not cater to the needs and desires of any ethnic group. Their programming has to have as wide an appeal as possible. This makes international broadcasters appear non-partisan. Whenever there is some inter-ethnic hostility or conflict between a government and a segment of society, the number of local people listening to international broadcasters increases tremendously because of the perceived impartiality of international broadcasters.

Mcquail *et al.* (1976), in an article entitled "The Television Audience," identify five gratification applications facilitated by the mass media as follows:

i) diversion (involving the emotional release and mediation of routine living among the listenership);

ii) self understanding (perpetuating images and narratives that enable listeners to understand themselves);

iii) reassurance (providing a collective frame of reference);

iv) self-esteem; and

v) identity formation (satisfying the urge to gather information about events, situations and circumstances that would enable the listener to achieve set objective or goals).

The above mentioned gratification uses of mass media show how those who exercise control over them will process content in order to either satisfy a need or cause a change in attitude among the listenership through a variety of formats. Broadcasters often channel their content through a combination of the entertainment, educational and information formats. Mcquail *et al.* seem to suggest that the uses target peoples' sense of self esteem and their notions of nationhood.

The Voice of America's use of the entertainment and special features formats to ensure listener loyalty dovetailed with Cowan's prioritised items which in turn satisfy in one way or another the items in the list above. The entertainment format is by nature value and perspective oriented. In Africa and in most oral societies, entertainment is always purposive, that is, it is directed at fulfilling definite social functions. Consequently, most broadcasters use music, drama and narratives as effective modes of cultural transmission and social change. Occasionally, educational programmes are presented through the entertainment and special features formats to achieve the same goals. Nichols' programmes used the special features format. One important differentiating characteristic of his programmes is that the content was essentially by and about Africans.

However, the Voice of America's English to Africa Service was never intended to be an objective educator and information channel. The ideological and entertainment functions had a higher priority than education. The programmes were used by the United States to win African elite over to American thinking and as a scheme to counteract the influence of the Soviet Union in Africa. Prior to the end of the Cold War, the Voice of America maintained neutrality vis-a-vis news transmission to Africa in order to ensure the loyalty of the Anglophone African elite and easy access to economic markets. Some studies have shown that broadcasters like the British Broadcasting Corporation have created a positive image towards Britain among its global audience. This in turn has led to British commercial success internationally. We can assume that the Voice of America has achieved similar results.

Recently, two major events have led to changes in emphasis at the Voice of America. First, the end of the Cold War ushered in changes in the contents and tone of VOA programming. Second, foci have shifted to accommodate technological innovations which encourage interactive access to information through multi-media systems. Currently, it is possible to access the Voice of America on the Internet. Approximately 50 countries can download 50,000 files per week. Out of the 75 countries world-wide connected to the Internet, 61 of them can and do access the Voice of America programming materials. Listeners can also telephone the radio station in Washington DC directly.

These changes are heralding a dialogue between the Voice of America and its multiple audiences. This bi-modal interaction is bound to shape and direct the emerging dialogue and programming content of the VOA and other international broadcasters in hitherto uncharted areas. The new trend is making communications boundaries and borders more permeable to those equipped with the new technologies to access information and participate in an emerging global dialogue. Countries that are technologically equipped to transmit a strong message will benefit from this porous situation. Recognising the implications of these innovations, the VOA became the first international broadcaster to launch a daily call-in talk show in November, 1994. Cowan (1994) says " . . . in the era of the information super highway, the Voice of America will become engaged in a dialogue - or more broadly, a conversation with our audience. At the VOA, I like to say that we have ears as well as a voice." This is admission that the Voice of America is finally catching up to Nichols' vision of a conversation. Technological innovations will make it possible for programmes like "Conversations with African Writers" to become more accessible to wider African and International audiences.

The three principles in the VOA Charter are rooted in American culture and ideals. They acquire different meanings and interpretations when appropriated by societies that have different languages, social and material circumstances.

The Third principle of the VOA Charter states that the VOA will disseminate the policies of the United States. By definition and function, the VOA exists to propagate the policies of the United States government - a function performed through the United States Information Agency (USIA), the parent organisation of the VOA. This dependent relationship influences the collection and processing of data to produce news and information with a definite American perspective. The reader has to bear in mind that "Conversations with African Writers" was not the focal programme for the Voice of America. News and special features programmes highlighting American ideals and institutions form the core of the VOA's broadcasting. Programmes like "Conversations with African Writers," Leo Sarkisian's "Music Time in Africa," and sports, among others, were only used to sustain listenership. No examples of American imaging in VOA programmes will be given because that is not the focus of this dissertation.

Bakhtin, writing extensively on the dialogic nature of language, has shown that the process of meaning making involves a selection from a variety of competing meanings. Selection implies choice, bias or favouring of some meanings against other meanings. Through selective exposure, certain images, metaphors and narratives are reinforced and recycled by media organisations. Through consistent exposure to data transformed into information, a society develops particular dispositions which, over time, become the stock phrases or the givens by which that society functions. Habit is a compelling motivator for the consumption of any product and service. Habitual use instils a sense of belonging and continuity among the listenership. This is Mcquail *et al.*'s third gratification of "reassurance" through which listeners are provided with a collective frame of reference. "Conversations with African Writers" programmes were used to ensure audience loyalty to the broader VOA programming repertoire. Kerby (1991) says "persons only *'know'* themselves after the fact of expression." This claim emphasises that the utterers' social setting, habitual structures and language use are crucial variables in defining the self and the social reality surrounding that self.

Stories and narratives promote certain images and perceptions and eventually shape the worldview of the audience and users to agree with the bias, prejudice or frame of reference inherent in the transmission. The public readily appropriate the emplotment narrative especially in the absence of alternative information and perspectives (Ball-Rokeach *et al.*, 1986).

No human being or institution can single-handedly *send, pre-sent or re-pre-sent* all that occurs in life. Selection is not only inevitable but also necessary. We have to bear in mind that the very reasons that necessitate communication will exclude certain data from the circuit of communication. Choice is mandatory. The need to inform, educate or entertain will set specific boundaries around the phenomena being processed for dissemination. The process occurs consciously, unconsciously and subconsciously and it is perpetuated by reporters, influenced by time and financial constraints, and the need to present a tightly structured story. Sometimes reporters, editors and those involved in mass media in their desire to transmit a concise story fail to recognise complex issues for what they are.

It would be both erroneous and simplistic to state that the VOA and other Western media do not seek the truth as they collect, process and disseminate information. The majority of journalists strive to identify the basic factors influencing situations, events and contexts. However reporters or observers of an event or incident operate or come to that event from a cultural or ideological perspective. They will describe one aspect or emphasise a particular dimension of the event under description. The observer of phenomena will necessarily choose from a wide range of images and symbols in making a certain presentation. The observer is anchored in definite political, ideological, economic and cultural milieu. This situatedness will influence the manner and type of presentation. The dominant cultural values are brought to bear on the situation being described. For example, Western journalists claim and believe to be committed to the pursuit and upholding of truth. In some instances, such claims have been used to obscure the fact that these journalists are situated in a Western cultural paradigm that reflects a definite social reality. Claims to objectivity have been used to lend credibility to their reporting. Objectivity has also been used to mask the fact that Western media or any media making such a claim has values and perspectives that are congruent to those espoused by the political, social and economic structures within their countries of origin. Wasburn (1992:48) suggests that it is this denial of congruency of perspectives that has restrained Western governments from direct or overt censorship of the mass media. Generally, media in Western economies tend toward the left of the conservative political spectrum thereby giving credence to the notions of objectivity and freedom of expression. This in turn gives the semblance of a free press. It is difficult for news makers and the political elite to give objective accounts of what they are describing because in most cases interpretation is couched in the description. For instance, the Cold War defined and shaped the interpretative mechanism of global events and news for over 40 years to the extent of engaging in regional wars.

It is against such a background that media create images and representations about interactions and relationships among and between peoples. The Frankfurt School has shown that the creation and dissemination of information is essentially a deliberate process that selects and packages certain images and metaphors often in support of the dominant ideology and culture. Elsewhere, Masmoudi (1978) commenting on Western media hegemony states:

> Such hegemony and domination are evident in the marked indifference of the media in the developed countries, particularly in the West, to the problems, concerns and aspirations of the developing countries. They are founded on financial, industrial, cultural and technological power and result in most of the developing countries being relegated to the status of mere consumers of information sold as a commodity like any other. They are exercised above all through the control of information flow, wrested and wielded by the transnational agencies operating without let or hindrance in most developing countries and based in turn on the control of technology, illustrated by the communication systems satellite, which are wholly dominated by the major international consortia.

(Masmoudi 4)

Masmoudi shows how the process of disseminating information and cultural imaging is wholly controlled by the West because of its powerful hegemonic position in the global communications system. The global media configuration impacts information collection and processing to the grassroots level. This situation contextualises the view that the editorial function encourages various forms of misrepresentation. Parenti (1993) discusses media's misrepresentations showing that the single most common form of misrepresentation is omission. Many Third World politicians, writers and cultural practitioners have for centuries protested against being misrepresented by Western media and cultural propagators. A variant of omission occurs when media disseminates lies and face value accounts about an event, a story or people. Lies told repeatedly in the absence of alternate views soon become habitual phrases in the frame of reference a society uses in describing external phenomena. Masmoudi (1978) in his discussion of disparities in media resources states:

> The five major transnational agencies monopolise between them the essential share of material and human potential,[5] while almost a third of the developing countries do not yet possess a single national agency. Inequality also exists in the distribution of the radio frequency spectrum between developed and developing countries. The former control nearly 90% of the source spectrum, while the developing countries have no means of protecting themselves against foreign broadcasts. It is frequently difficult for them to compete, particularly since some of these broadcasts are transmitted from stations located within developing countries.
>
> (Masmoudi 3-4)

The foregoing discussion helps to ground and evaluate the methods Nichols and the VOA employed in the preparation of the final broadcast product. The description also reveals how relationships between power and control on one hand and institutional structures on the other are mediated in diverse social universes. My purpose is to document the effect the gatekeeping function has both at the individual and institutional levels on the final broadcast product. This description about Lee Nichols' professional experiences and how the VOA works is an illustration of the powerful position international broadcasters occupy in the global media resources system. Whenever international broadcasters fail to show sensitivity about the object of reportage they validate claims made by the Non-Aligned nations and other Less Developed Countries about the powerful influence media resources have on the creation and modification of social realities. Masmoudi's comment cited earlier speaks to this power when he says

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[5] The top five international agencies together possess more than 500 bureaus, maintain 4319 correspondents or stringers abroad in 116 countries, and each issue a daily average of 1 1/2 to 17 million words.

> . . . such hegemony and domination are evident in the marked indifference of the media in the developed countries, particularly in the West, to the problems, concerns and aspirations of the developing countries. They are founded on financial, industrial, cultural and technological power and result in most of the developing countries being relegated to the status of mere consumers of information sold as a commodity like any other.
>
> (Masmoudi 4)

Masmoudi's comments are a strident pointer to how vulnerable and precarious a position the Less Developed Countries find themselves in when it comes to articulating authentic voices. Masmoudi's observations underpin Third World protestations that transnational media agencies have a tendency to commodify literary and cultural materials about and from Third World countries. Because of the West's hegemonic power Less Developed Countries find themselves compelled to resist the West both from within their national borders as well as externally with regard to the creation of social reality. The West's influence is like a colossus straddling the hemispheres casting an ominous shadow over global print and electronic media. This research does not intend to create the impression that Less Developed Countries are caught up in an inevitable situation. Chapter One documents the Third World's spirited counter offensive against the West's exercise of media hegemony. This resistance involves different people ranging from the grassroots to the literary and intellectual levels. African scholars and writers have participated in this struggle alongside the political leadership in their countries producing different effects and results. Often, writers present varied visions of the creation of social reality that contest the prevailing ideological orientations. "Conversations With African Writers" is a good illustration of the types of visions African writers present about their countries with regard to social construction of reality and issues of access to and distribution of global media resources. In these conversations, the writers address the central issues and concerns of their times and construct social universes using symbolic means to articulate their perceptions of society.

CHAPTER THREE

AUDIENCE, LANGUAGE AND INTENTION

Content and Intent of African Writing of the 1950s to 1970s

The majority of writers in the series "Conversations with African Writers," wished or claimed to write for a mass audience. Listening to the conversations revealed that the writers associated theme and the language of expression with the question of audience. Similarly, they discussed issues related to genre categories and the medium they found most convenient for their artistic purposes. Writers like Cyprian Ekwensi of Nigeria, Charles Mangua, Abdilatif Abdalla and Grace Ogot of Kenya, and Pat Maddy of Sierra Leone, to name a few, categorically state that they write for the masses. Cyprian Ekwensi revealed that he began his writing when he worked as a forester in Nigeria. He said, "In the forest you have many, many lonely hours and the best thing you can do is just sit down and write," (Enugu, Nigeria, 1974).[6] He is hinting at the loneliness that may indeed prompt a writer to commit certain feelings and ideas to paper. Ekwensi began writing for very pragmatic reasons - to overcome boredom and loneliness. When asked to identify his audience, Ekwensi declared that he wrote for humanity. He said he writes on issues that affect every living person at one time or another

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[6] Citations from the conversations will be made according to the place, date and number of interview as first recorded by Lee Nichols.

> My audience consists of the ordinary working man. I don't pretend to aim at any intellectuals. If I'm in a taxi and the taxi driver recognises me and talks about what I have written, it makes me feel I am reaching the masses. . . . In order to be able to influence the masses, one must come down to that level of Charles Dickens or the Russian writer Dostoyevsky or perhaps Hemingway in America, even Shakespeare. You can regard Shakespeare as a writer for the masses because the writer who writes about life and death, truth and fiction, justice and injustice, corruption and virtues of life - this is a man who touches the elements of life and everyone understands these elements.
>
> (Cyprian Ekwensi, Enugu, August 9, 1974)

When asked to comment about the notion of Art for Art's sake, he said

> It is impossible for a writer in our society to be writing literature just for the sake of Art. Because there are so many conscience-pricking problems which writing must expose and in exposing them lead the way to a consciousness of these problems and an attempt to put them right. So that directly or indirectly, the writer in today's Africa must be a committed writer. He must be committed to truth. He must be committed to the exposure of the ills of society. And he must be committed to pointing the direction toward the future as he understands it.
>
> (Cyprian Ekwensi, Enugu, August 9, 1974)

Ekwensi sees writing as having essentially pragmatic and pedagogical intentions. He considers writing to be a vehicle through which the audience is sensitised about social conditions prevailing at the time of writing. He further says writing should help the society solve those problematic issues that remain inimical to the majority in society. Therefore, the very practice of writing places a great responsibility on the author. Ekwensi suggests that a writer should be committed to three things namely: the truth, exposing social ills, and providing a vision as best he or she can. These three things will enable a society to forge ahead. Ekwensi is of the opinion that the African writer of the 1960s and 1970s can ill afford to indulge in Art for Art's sake. The writer has to interrogate issues and concerns that are at the core of his society.

The Ugandan writer Okot p'Bitek (Austin, Texas, May, 1978) expresses similar views concerning the place and role of the African writer. He says

> one is challenging ourselves to ask basic questions about the ideal society, about the value of human life, about how we should organise ourselves, about how we should be ourselves and not try to be anything else. I really hold very strongly that an artist should tease people, should prick needles into everybody so that they don't go to sleep and think everything is fine. And I think perhaps this is what one is doing and suffering for it sometimes but having a lot of fun - we should all be looking at our own society today and asking questions all the time and creating ideas, creating new ideas for the governors of our people.
>
> (Okot p'Bitek, Austin, Texas, May, 1978)

Okot points out several important issues the African writer and his society must involve themselves with. He rules out any form of complacency in the audience and the writer. Both must "challenge" themselves with regard to what value they place on human life. Most importantly, the audience has to be organised and above all have a healthy self image. The phrase " - we should be ourselves and not try to be anything else," gains considerable significance when analysed against Africa's colonial heritage. The colonial experience denigrated Africans to the extent that they came to accept labels assigned to them by the colonisers. Therefore the African writer writing in the 1960s and 1970s had the duty to question the African's sense of self and nationhood. Okot p'Bitek introduces an interesting aspect about the writer's role, that of a tease. He seems to suggest that there should be a playfulness in the works of African writers of this period. It appears that Okot would like the works of African writers in the 1960s and 1970s to produce a sense of enthralment in the readers and audiences. He then adds the artist should "prick needles into everybody so that they don't go to sleep thinking everything is fine." The implication here is that the African writer should use laughter as some form of anaesthesia to enable society to bear the pain produced by the writer's investigative needles. No segment of society should be spared the artist's exploratory probes. I read the metaphor to imply that the needles are used in making incisions and sutures. The works should be disturbing enough to cause society to remain alert. Such an engaging and committed art is bound to cause the African writer problems with other segments of society. Okot suggests the artists should accept and indeed expect tension and pain as a by-product of their writing. Okot expects writers to emulate the talkative weaverbirds by incessantly interrogating events, issues, and challenges facing society. The artists' push should target the creation of innovative ideas that would be used to spur the politician in particular and society in general into upholding social good.

This meliorative social role of the writer encouraged by p'Bitek raises questions about the relationship between writers who perceive themselves to hold the prophetic mantle and the politician who often acts like a king. Grace Ogot (August 28, 1974) of Kenya feels that writers should have adequate latitude in order to articulate truth as they perceive it in their society. This is the same "truth" that Ekwensi mentions above. Ogot continues:

> a writer worth her salt should be a free agent. And I feel that unless we have been specifically asked and accept to write for a particular purpose or for a society - because occasionally we write against a society, occasionally, we just want to depict what we see which we are not happy about. Quite a number of people who are writing now do realise that in other parts of the world, people who write pure fiction have been imprisoned for this because they did step on somebody's foot or they did say something which should never have been known to the outside world. And they are prepared to defend it. And Africa or Kenya can not be isolated from this. People who are writing fiction will definitely touch on the subjects which, some of them, may be a taboo to a government or to a church or to a family or to a people.
>
> (Grace Ogot, Nairobi, August 28, 1974)

Grace Ogot feels that writers should not misuse their function in society by engaging in compromising relationships with other social forces and actors. She admits that writers may be patronised by the state or other groups in society but writers have to retain the right to accept or reject such patronage. She introduces the issue of the writers' freedom of content and intent in their writing which must be purposive. Ogot uses a very telling metaphor, that of salt while hinting at that of light. Jesus Christ in John 5:13-15 used the same metaphor in reference to his disciples whom he calls the salt and the light of this earth. Salt is useful for a variety of purposes which include flavouring of food and prevention of decay. These disciples could only become the salt and light of the world in so far as they proclaimed the Good News of the human race's reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ whom God offered as an atonement for sin. By pointing to the desired or desirable goal, the African writer of the 1970s becomes the light that is to illuminate the way forward and the salt that both flavours the journey and heals the wounds sustained during the travelling period.

Grace Ogot seems to concur with Okot p'Bitek on the writer's role in society when the later says "I really hold very strongly that an artist should tease people, should prick needles into everybody so that they don't go to sleep and think everything is fine." She depicts the writer as an agent for social change whose collaboration the politician has to seek and cultivate. She further points out that writing "pure fiction" has caused and will continue to cause tension between the writer who plays the role of the prophet and the politician. Both Grace Ogot and Okot p'Bitek identify the tension and potential danger writers face in their relationships with the rulers of the people. Writers have to be courageous and defend whatever position they perceive to constitute what Ekwensi calls "the elements of life" understood by everybody. Grace Ogot seems to be in agreement with Okot's suggestion that African writers should be offering innovative ideas that politicians would in turn appropriate for the governance of the general population. Ogot leaves the African writer no room for non-involvement with societal issues. She feels that the African writer writing in the 1960s and 1970s is supposed to go against the grain if need arises. The writer is to challenge the government, church, society or even an influential family whenever any of these segments of society assumes unmerited power. These segments interact to create the institutions that make up a society. Ogot points out that tension and at times outright antagonism have marked the relationships between the writer, politician and society in human history.

Conflicts between politicians and other voices articulating dessent towards the politicians abound in human history. The writer often times acts as the prophetic voice in the wilderness. Baker (1982) documents that in Old Testament studies, the word prophet has two meanings. One meaning describes the prophet as one who is called by God and imbued with words to deliver to fellow human beings. The other meaning describes the word prophet as one who calls in the name of God. African writers perceive themselves as people who are called to speak out on the ethical and moral issues in society as well as people calling society to repentance and restitution. Society in general must heed the writers' call in order to maintain wholesomeness. Politicians perceive a challenge in the writers' utterances and attempt not only to resist but also to suppress them using whatever means at their disposal. The prophetic office is handed down to the office bearers by a divine being. Prophets are equipped with clues and knowledge of major events yet to occur in society. Their office is concerned with ethical and social issues in society.

True prophets display the following four distinct features in their office: proclamation, prediction, use of symbolic means to communicate their messages, and intercession. Proclamation addresses the pressing issues of the moment while prediction illuminates future events on the basis of contemporary events. Prophets used a lot of symbols in communicating their message to their societies. The last feature refers to the prophetic function of standing before God on behalf of society. Moses established the Mosaic-theocratic rule which combined the prophetic and kingly offices. However, this dual office ended with the second king of Israel. The Old Testament documents that this type of rule found continued expression in "the association of anointed king and anointed prophet" (J. P. Baker 975-986 in J. D. Baker *et al.*)

Ancient Israel gives excellent examples of the struggle or relationships of unease between the king and the prophet. The prophet Jeremiah started his prophetic ministry in 626 BC. and it ended in 585 BC. His prohetic calling lasted for period of forty years covering the reigns of the last five kings of Judah before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. He lived during a time of tremendous political and social upheaval in the Near East. J. G. S. S. Thomas says that Jeremiah recognised that " . . . Reformation in worship without reformation of heart was useless. . . since religion was essentially a moral and spiritual relation with God (31:31-34), its demands must also be moral and spiritual. . . . Individual responsibility was to be the foundation of character and spiritual life (in J. D. Douglas *et al.* 558-563)." King Zedekiah the last of the kings of Israel before the exile into Babylon, acting on the advice of his political advisors, persecuted, imprisoned, tore Jeremiah's written prophecies and condemned him to death because of his strident message that rebuked both the King, the political establishment and the general population that were involved in rampant corruptuion and idolatry. The Holy Bible in the Book of Jeremiah states

> Now Zedekiah king of Judah imprisoned him there, saying, "Why do you prophesy as you do? You say, "This is what the Lord says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will capture it. Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape

> out of the hands of the Babylonians but will certainly be handed over to the king of Babylon, and will speak with him face to face and see him with his own eyes. He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, where he will remain until I deal with him, declares the Lord. If you fight the Babylonians, you will not succeed."
>
> (Holy Bible, Jer. 32:3-5, NIV)

Likewise some of the African writers interviewed appropriated the role of the voice of morality calling their peoples and governments to individual and collective responsibility with regard to the management of national affairs. Political events on the African continent since regaining political independence in the late fifties speak to the ruthless persecution and premature deaths of some writers who have faithfully followed the calling of their vocation.

The Sierra Leonean writer Yulisa Amadu "Pat" Maddy (July 2, Freetown, 1975) says that his primary audience is Sierra Leonean society. He is however saddened by his society's negative self-image and the neglect it shows toward creative artists. In his efforts to reach his audience, he has chosen theatre and drama as the most appropriate media of communication. Through theatre and drama, Maddy criticises those negative aspects of his society. To exemplify this, he refers to a character in his play Gbana Bendu, and says, "here we are with a beggar and his shadow and the beggar does not want to accept what he is but the shadow is giving you exactly the picture of what the beggar is"

(Freetown, Sierra Leone, July 2, 1975). Yulisa "Pat" Maddy through drama and theatre interrogates his society's desire to become the Other. The illustration of the beggar echoes Okot p'Bitek's relentless provocation of his society to remain true to whom they are as a people. Yulisa "Pat" Maddy sees the artist's role as that of a mirror from which society should glean images of its current circumstances and conditions. The African writer of the 1960s and 1970s was one who had to pursue his vocation faithfully. Nichols asked Maddy to comment on the Sierra Leonian response to his writing. His comment:

> At the moment, I find that people are opposed to quite a lot of things I have written. But at the same time, I am happy because they can really see themselves in it. And I have seen people gone mad by seeing their own shadow in the mirror and this is what I do.
>
> (Yulisa Pat Maddy, Freetown, July 2, 1975)

It is evident that African writers of the 1960s and 1970s provoked their societies to engage in an introspective examination of all segments of their communities in the hope of doing what was moral and just. These writers proceeded to perform their prophetic duty without fear or favour.

Ekwensi, Ogot, Okot and Maddy agree that African writers of the 1960s and 1970s are duty bound to take a deep look into their societies and faithfully reveal whatever they discover. These writers seem to suggest that society and the political establishment are obligated to actively work to resolve issues and concerns that are likely to bob up from the depths of society. Perhaps the most vocal voice advocating for the common people is Maddy's. He rejects elitist writing:

> I'm not writing now for the elitist group. I am writing for the man in the street. I am writing for kids who don't know whether they should go home when they've had a fight with their parents. I'm writing for the labourer who is now being taught what is self-help and he wants to help himself. I'm writing for people all over the world who really want to make something out of their own lives by working for themselves and doing what they want to do, not the person who is waiting for somebody to come and do something for him. . . .I am going for the masses. It is they I'm interested in because they have got a rich culture, they have got tradition, they have got their gods, they have got their indigenous way of life. And this is rich, this is what I want to touch. I'm not interested in the still-born or archaic traditions of imported culture. I am with the masses because I am one of them.
>
> (Yulisa Pat Maddy, Freetown, July 2, 1975)

It is evident from this quotation that Maddy has set off clear boundaries within which he writes. He categorically dismisses the elite as an ineffective group which is adept at aping foreign culture. His interests lie within the life experiences that ordinary people undergo. He focuses on areas where every day life tensions intersect. He admires people who are self-motivated, people who take initiative in solving their physical, emotional and spiritual problems. He finds an established and rooted authenticity in traditional culture. Maddy admits to using ancient Temne and Krio folklore in his writing.

This rich culture is an oasis that nurtures a positive self-image among the indigenous population. He focuses on the younger generation among his audience because he perceives of them as the propagators of an indigenous Sierra Leonian culture. He says, "If I'm going to educate my own kids as to the morals of our society, I have to let them know by the tradition of the society what morals were and then they will understand the morals of the present in order for them to formulate a moral for the future." Maddy demonstrates that the question of audience is closely related to that of content. He shows that a writer not only selects a target audience but also the issues and concerns such an audience finds relevant to their daily lives. The writer then assumes pontifical and pedagogical roles in relation to his chosen audience. Maddy decides to draw content from his target audience's vibrant oral traditions as a signpost to enable the audience to understand their current situation. It is only after they comprehend the present in terms of the past that society can begin to evolve a moral standard to guide their future behaviour and relationship.

Kenyan novelist Charles Mangua (Abidjan, July 19, 1975) says his first attempt at a novel failed because he had set out to create Literature with all the formal trappings. He admits that he tripped over the aspects of composition making the novel neither co-ordinated nor consistent.

Out of this eye-opening experience, he says

> I thought why not just go for something that is just a straight story. Something that will amuse you. Something that would appeal to people who are not even interested in Literature - most of the books written by African writers are usually interesting to people who are interested in literature - to know more about African Literature. But then there are a lot of Africans who are not interested in Literature. They just want something to read. They want to read themselves to bed, to go to sleep. And these are the people - really not covered by a lot of African writing. They are ignored and this is the chap I was thinking about as a reader.
>
> (Charles Mangua, Abidjan, July 19, 1975)

Mangua raises an important point. He is interested in bringing enjoyment, amusement and an air of enchantment to reading. Reading should be fun, captivating the reader into an imaginary world. He feels that many African writers of his time paid too much attention to the technical aspects of literature.[7] Mangua says that the trend to emphasise the formal characteristics of writing is a device used to erect exclusionary boundaries that favour the intellectual. Mangua suggests that placing stress on the technical dimensions of literature has a direct influence on the type of language chosen by most African writers of the 1950s and 1970s. In his opinion, a writer should not

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[7] Similar comments were made by Euphrase Kezilahabi of Tanzania who had to engage in a literary battle with those in support of maintaining a stifling grip on form and style in Kiswahili literature. His views are discussed later in this chapter.

> just limit oneself to school language. A lot of African literature is good but it discriminates. Take a driver, for instance, who just reads a little bit of English. When he takes a very nice book like The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born, its wonderfully written but what can he do with it?
>
> (Charles Mangua, Abidjan, July 19, 1975)

Mangua stresses the point that his contemporary African writers failed to cater for the general public which does not have expert technical knowledge about literature. His main point is that average readers who have minimal literary training are alienated by the complex academic language and literary devices found in most African writing of the period between the 1950s and 1970s. He also points out that many books of African writing of the 1950s and 1970s were written for the school system to be read as set books. This statement has the hidden implication that the content and themes of this writing might not have addressed the concerns of ordinary citizens. He stressed that both writers and publishers would want to produce a book that would have a big market. Mangua deliberately chose not to write for such a lucrative segment because he thought of "the taxi driver and others. They don't have much to read in way of African writing. They can read James Bond, they can read these popular westerns. But the Africans have not really given the ordinary reader this sort of book, for relaxing, for amusement, just for enjoyment, something to read" (Charles Mangua, Abidjan, July 19, 1975).

This statement speaks to the sometimes seemingly impervious boundary between serious and popular/ pulp literature. Writers writing in the two modes cater for/ to different worlds or different audiences who put literature to varied pragmatic uses. There are instances in which effective communication among the variegated worlds or target audiences is hindered within the colonial and post-colonial landscapes. These worlds are formed and framed by language, educational, social and cultural boundaries. African writers of the 1950s and 1970s seem to have embarked on a quest to make the multiple boundaries surrounding social contexts permeable but in reality the language of expression they chose to use often alienated their indigenous audiences. Mangua seems to suggest that the different worlds confronting the writer during this period made this writing problematic. He says:

> I think one of the main problems with any African writer anywhere is the question of authenticity. I am writing in a language that is not my own. I am using expressions that are not my own. And I think that when you write in a language that is not yours, you can never really put down to paper exactly what you want to put in the way you want to put it. Suppose an English writer wrote a wonderful book in English and it comes out wonderfully in his own language. He is writing to his own people - he feels gratified. Now I am writing in English which is not my language. I think about my audience. I am not even thinking about my mother because she doesn't read English - I don't have the same joy, I don't feel as happy as the English writer would feel. Because I know when I write something, my grandmother can never read it. She will never know. I am writing for people like myself. But those people who you feel so much about, your own mother, she gave life to you, you can not communicate with her in your own writing. The

> man in the village, he is completely left out and you are writing about him. He would like to know but no way.
>
> (Charles Mangua, Abidjan, July 19, 1975)

The issue of the authenticity in most African writing done in foreign languages that Mangua mentions continues to vex African writers. The writers themselves derive very limited satisfaction from their craft because they are dealing with a medium in which they don't have as great a competence as the native speakers of the language. Mangua's comments raise an interesting issue concerning the relationship between a writer and the product of the creative act. He implies some sort of disjuncture between author and work arising from the sense of alienation from the indigenous audience. It would appear that the writing of this period suffered a double alienation, that is, the audience felt the language and content of African writing did not address their reality while some writers expressed a desire to forge closer communicative links with their local audiences. In their search for relevance and a warm rapport with their audiences, some of the writers in the 1950s and 1970s opted to use different media and genres. Writers like Pat Maddy, Peninah Mlama, Kole Omotoso, Akiwumi Isola, Zulu Sofola, Abdilatif Abdalla, Euphrase Kezilahabi among others have variously used theatre, drama, poetry and written in indigenous languages as a means of communicating with their select audiences.

Zulu Sofola of Nigeria (July 31, 1974) says she writes for ordinary people, "I am trying to reach the general masses. So I am not trying to reach the highbrow or for the foreign audiences but for people who understand the human situation and who can identify with human problems" (Zulu Sofola, Ibadan, July 31, 1974). When asked to describe the source of the inspiration to her writing, Sofola declares

> There are three categories right now from which any writer, any creative writer, can take his material. It can be strictly traditional. It can be the conflict in cultures. Or it can be strictly the Western-educated, Western-oriented African situation, so you have the elite. Now I write within these three worlds but I deal with problems that I find are somehow strong in the daily lives of the people.
>
> (Zulu Sofola, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

In order to do this, Zulu Sofola spends a lot of time listening to indigenous language, especially that spoken by the elders. Language is the key to cracking the kernel of indigenous philosophy, wisdom and aesthetic standards and practices. She says, "The more I looked around in the society, the more I found so much material that should be utilised." She is convinced that African writers must go back to the traditions of their people in order to articulate their problems, concerns and challenges. Zulu Sofola explains that the African has been grappling with the tensions caused by tremendous social transformation. She categorises the sources of such change into four distinct yet related areas: (a) the colonial era; (b) cultural conflict arising from the African's adoption of European cultural mores; (c) the challenges posed by the post-independence era. In this category, issues revolve around good governance and management of the emergent states; and (d) cultural renaissance in which many Africans are searching for their heritage. It is a question of self-definition and self-identity, of a people's self-awareness. Zulu Sofola believes that a healthy self-consciousness can only grow out of firm cultural foundations. She says, "I think that we should have our Shakespeares first, we should have our Sophocles. We should get these things established."[8]

In this conversation, Zulu Sofola comments on her play The Wedlock of the Gods. The play gets its title from a Nigerian myth about lovers who encounter numerous challenges only to be rescued by the gods. The Wedlock of the Gods is in a traditional setting dealing with the issue of wife inheritance upon the death of the husband. Old Wines are Tasty explores the conflict between the European-educated elite who want to lead or transform traditional society. The three worlds Sofola identifies represent distinct views, expectations, attitudes, beliefs and values in the ever changing African environment. These distinct divisions in emergent nation states represent distinct hopes, aspirations and world-views that do not always co-exist harmoniously. Narrative agents confront each other within and across the boundaries of the three worlds.

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[8] I discuss the implications of Sofola's comments in relation to the educational systems in Africa in a later Chapter.

Nichols reports that during his travels in Africa, he learnt that African drama was becoming one of the most innovative and experimental forms of theatre in Africa.[9] He mentions Bob Leshoi's interesting work at the University of Dar es Salaam in which he incorporated the use of bark cloth costumes, village shrines, and the sounds of various animals to create an atmosphere similar to village life. The Zambian National University had created a theatre built of soil where the audience sat in an open air theatre on dried earthen seats. The stage was lit by bonfire and lanterns simulating rural conditions. Efua Sutherland was taking her experimental theatre to Ghanaian audiences in villages across the nation. She recorded comments from these audiences because she was convinced that they are the authentic critics of African literature. Nichols calls these new trends a "movement toward the development of a truly indigenous African theatre." Among this emerging group was the Nigerian poet, short story writer, and playwright Ola Rotimi.

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[9] Drama and theatre are two interrelated and interconnected processes of cultural production. Drama refers exclusively to written texts, while theatre refers to the enactment of dramatic texts in time and space dimensions. Theatre involves the integration of several non-textual elements such as lighting, acting, sound and set design in the performance of dramatic texts. Theatre emphasises on the centrality of a live interactive audience. Although dramatic texts usually provide the initial impetus for most performances, theatre need not necessarily derive from drama; performance pieces can be created in the absence of written texts. Conversely, not all dramatic texts are performed.

At the time of the interview in 1974, Rotimi had published The Gods Are Not to Blame, an adaptation of the Greek story based on the Oedipus saga, and Kurumi. On his return from the United States of America, he decided to conduct research in the oral traditions of his Yoruba people. His main purpose was to ensure that he weaned himself of American and European influences through observing, gathering and recording material which he infused into his later plays. He says traditional Yoruba philosophy and mythology found their way into his creative efforts and that the use of traditional materials gives African writing a distinctive quality. He cautions against incorporating oral material into a piece of creative writing without integrating it into the core of the creative endeavour. He uses the amphitheatre architecture at the University of Ile-Ife where he works to re-enact the rural setting in which the audience encloses the action. This physical arrangement gives prominence to audience participation. Writing with a clear purpose Rotimi says

> I think what makes any work of Art an enduring material for posterity to appreciate is the message that it imparts to the people. And I think every writer should strive to say something to the people of today about the people of the past for the benefit of the people to come.
>
> (Ola Rotimi Ile-Ife, Nigeria, July, 1974)

This quotation shows his symmetrical worldview in which there is no disjuncture among the three worlds that he writes for, about and to. This view ties in with historical perspective which enables him to get examples from the past which he presents to contemporary society as examples to be emulated. Ola Rotimi expressed very definite ideas about the foci in his writing.

> I portray the problem of leadership. And I think this is a problem that touches the heart of every well meaning African. Leadership for a continent or for nations that are developing in a world of immense and diverse interests. I think the only way we can hold our own is really through self-sufficiency, self-recognition of our potentials and well disciplined sense of direction in mobilising these potentials for the realisation of where we belong as a people in world culture. And when I say world culture, I don't mean the Arts but I also include politics. And as developing nations in Africa, it's through dynamic leadership, leadership with foresight, leadership that is averse to greed, to nepotism, to tribalism. The type of leadership that is self-sacrificing. This is the only solution perhaps to the problems that face us as emerging countries in the world today.
>
> (Ola Rotimi, Ile-Ife, July, 1974)

Like the other writers, Ola Rotimi is concerned with both public and personal issues. His primary concern is with the psychological issue of self definition. At the public level, he wants the politician to be accountable for his actions. He is quite emphatic about his target audience. He writes for

> First and foremost, the bulk of the African audience. Foreign audience to me is immaterial. I would expect that when my own people appreciate my work, this interest would reverberate world-wide. However, this doesn't mean that I negate the fact that as a Nigerian, I am still part of the world community. I

> think Goethe, Chekov and other eminent Russian playwrights have contributed to the cultural awareness of the people of the USSR today in the same manner which Shakespeare has done, passed on his wisdom to the people of England, and Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller to excite the American conscience to an awareness of the political, economical, social awareness.
>
> (Ola Rotimi, Ile-Ife, July, 1974)

Rotimi's compatriot Kalu Uka (Nsukka, August 4, 1974) who began his writing vocation as a poet in 1960 has been engaged with contemporary Nigerian issues since 1965 on his return from graduate studies in Canada. His writing is largely inspired by the Nigerian Civil War which left a deep impression on him. As his writing evolved, he realised that poetry as a genre had a very limited audience. He shifted to writing novels and plays. His writing explores and interrogates the brutality and senselessness of the Nigerian Civil War. It is also a satirical examination of various aspects of life. He writes primarily for the Nigerian and African audiences who are affected most by the issues he explores. However, he feels that he is constrained by the suspicious attitude prevalent in his society.

> There is a difficulty of course that locally you have less tolerance than you have abroad. People are so sensitive in Africa especially about self-criticism that any time you criticise, they think you are destroying. They don't see that it can be constructive. You want to get a hearing from people who think you are saying something. You may not want to become a figure of controversy like Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Wole Soyinka or most of the West Indian writers I know, but you still want to say what you want to say for your own people to hear you. And you may be a prophet without honour at home but you hope sooner

> or later this honour that has been given from abroad would be recognised at home. So I expect both the foreign and local to be interested in what I am writing.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

Perhaps Kalu Uka's problems arise from his writing which focuses on issues, concerns and problems confronting his people. He sees the writer as the prophetic voice that calls a people to an awareness of their current situation. He feels that society in general has taken for granted the nature of social, political, economic and cultural transformation taking place in Africa and the so called developing countries of the world. The desire to be at the same social, economic and political levels with Western countries may be short sighted and ill advised in that

> these people have taken centuries to develop. And we are trying to catch up to bridge in a few years the achievements of several centuries. That brings on stresses and strains that only the most well equipped minds can cope with. And in order to point out some of these problems so that people can know how best to tackle them whether they are in economics or in town planning, or even in the use of language, I think the writer is in a position to provide his own kind of leadership.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

Uka points out that the local audience he writes for is incapable of reading and writing in any of the current languages and as such they remain basically ignorant of what is happening in their world. Writers then have to assume the role of teachers to their society. They have to address different aspects of life in their society as they try to sensitise the general public about their peculiar circumstances and how such circumstances relate to the broader global situation. The prophetic unction on writers requires them to be persons of the utmost integrity in conducting their duties as explained above. The Old Testament usage of the word prophet implied that the office bearers were to impel the word of God to their societies. Society was to appropriate the uttered word that helped them take cognisance of their contemporary circumstances. By applying the revealed knowledge, hearers of the spoken word would begin to acknowledge their heritage and liberate themselves from all sorts of shackles. Likewise, African societies of the 1960s and 1970s needed prophets who were to perform a similar function. Uka says of his society:

> They need an interpreter if you like - and this interpreter must be an honest man and must be a man who can not cheat either side. So I see the writer as a possible interpreter. The politician is far too tempted with money, with the magic of technology, with all the other specifics of life to be this kind of interpreter that I am talking about. I am trying therefore to provide some means whereby my people can understand themselves, understand what is happening with the world. I don't believe that one should then shout these things from rooftops or take up dogmatic positions like saying "Oh I'm a committed writer by which I mean I'm a communist, or a Marxist, or a capitalist or anything." I mean interpreting your people from what is available from their own indigenous ways until you evolve something which in fact puts their life in the way that literature can put people's life with a spiritual vision, with an idea of what they are, who they are in the world be very clear to them.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

Uka does not believe that writers should ascribe to any dogmatic views apart from an unswerving loyalty to truth and honesty as they perceive them. In the same way he does not ascribe to Art for Art's sake. He says any writing in this fashion is likely to become remote, very personal and less readable, like some of the European romantic writers. Kalu Uka feels writing should be like eavesdropping on one's self. He suggests:

> one should notice the absurdities of life very clearly, be able to put them in perspective, put them where they belong in the cycle of human mistakes which is our life - and the writer ought to feel with his own highly sensitive self, if it requires carrying placards, let him carry placards, if it requires saying to a particular regime, "You are not doing well," let him do it, let him say it. But of course when he begins to transmute all these experiences into writing, they become not propaganda but rather relevant writings based on an experience or experiences that are very, very crucial to society.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

Another young Nigerian writer Akiwumi Isola (Lagos, Nigeria, July 28, 1974), poet, playwright and novelist writes about contemporary life in his society. Like most young writers in these interviews, he acknowledges the importance of his heritage but focuses on the present. Isola decided to write in the Yoruba language because of the need to communicate with his people. He acknowledges that using the Yoruba language presented problems in terms of a limited audience because in the 1960s and 1970s literacy among the Yoruba was very low. In order to achieve effective communication he chose drama because it enables him to overcome the problems posed by illiteracy among his Yoruba audience. The audience can watch staged performances in addition to television and listening to the plays over radio. His plays deal with topical issues like barrenness, religion, and corruption in government. Isola's primary goal is to sensitise his society about individual liberty and freedom and how to protect such freedom. His audience consists primarily of the Yoruba and Africans on the continent. He believes that one cannot separate the content from the media that convey the message:

> If one wants to get African thought, African culture, the African way of thinking across, I think it is best done in African languages. You know that language is the vehicle of culture. If you remove language, most of the things one treasures in the cultures of the world will be half removed - the more literature you have in African languages the more other people will want to study these languages to see the treasure you have in the literature of these languages. And it is then that the full impact of what you are trying to say will be felt by other people who are not African - I think the African identity, the African way of life, the African philosophy are embedded in African languages and the translation of this into English or French will not get the main thing across.
>
> (Akiwumi Isola, Lagos, July 28, 1974)

Most writers in this series of conversations acknowledged the essential links among language, content and audience. They stressed the fact that the language medium facilitated effective communication of ideas, views, attitudes and the culture of a people. A society looks into its literature in order to find an axis upon which to conduct social affairs. Sometimes such a gaze reveals painful and unpleasant things in a society. Maddy's comment, " . . . I've seen people gone mad by seeing their own shadow in the mirror," is a pertinent example of how contemplation leads to a serious evaluation of one's circumstances. Isola (Lagos, July 28, 1974) agrees with Mangua's comments on the centrality of the language vehicle. He says that he developed the urge to write after reading a lot of French literature; " . . . what attracts scholars to languages, to the literatures of other languages, will be the amount of literature that already exists in that language." He suggests that those involved in artistic processes should emphasise the centrality of language. He insists that any " . . . good work of art in any language should be translated into many languages . . . writing in an African language and not wanting to translate is like burying one's treasure in a local area. But the important thing is that one has to write first in an African language." The crucial point in this suggestion is that a writer should begin from a world that is familiar.

R. D. Molefe (September 26, 1976) from Botswana writes in the Setswana language with purely pedagogical intentions. He says, " . . . I would like to teach our young people to take pride in their language because formerly we thought that a good book must only be written in English." The Zambian Dominic Mulaisho (August 16, 1975) expressed similar views concerning the importance of writing in indigenous languages.

> The first problem is one of language. Because it does not matter how much one knows a foreign language. Your indigenous language will always offer you better opportunities to express your personality. So that the first problem that I as an African writer writing in a foreign language have is the fact that I have to think in my language and express my thoughts in a foreign language.
>
> (Dominic Mulaisho, Lusaka, August 16, 1975)

He feels that this is a serious dilemma that the African writer has to address at one time or another. Mulaisho is referring to the language hurdle that many African writers have to skilfully work through as they create their worlds built upon words. He was motivated to begin writing in response to what he calls the "Falstaffian farcical figures" that populated most African writing of the 1960s and 1970s. He says, " . . . I would like to see Africa involved in the interpretation and re-interpretation of man, which is, in my opinion, what literature is all about" (Lusaka, August 16, 1975).

These writers ironically portrayed African politicians in the same way the colonial administrator caricatured them. Hume claimed that

> The Negro is naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilised nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers among them, no arts, no science.
>
> (cited in Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Writers in Politics 1981:30)

Mulaisho wants to correct this negative portrayal and inscription of the African. As a writer, he is duty bound to help the African go back to his basic humanity.

> I felt that, first of all as an educationist, if we were serious about an African-oriented educational system, it was not the teachers' responsibility alone to produce the books out of which our children should be taught. Secondly, I felt that although a number of books were being written by Africans, some of these books did not bring out the nobleness of the African - I felt that any contribution one could make of presenting the people of Africa, first and foremost essentially as human beings no different from any other - that being human beings, they are motivated by the same instinct. There is a universality about human nature which I felt was sometimes being done injustice to by the way we have set out to write.
>
> (Dominic Mulaisho Lusaka, August 16, 1975)

Mulaisho raises two significant issues that have continued to plague the cultural debate in Africa. First of all, he considers it the duty of every African writer to produce materials for the educational system. He suggests such material should aim at a positive portrayal of the African personage. The intention would be the liberation of the African psyche from the internalised stereotypical notions about the African self. Short of making an outright mention of some of the writers, he refers to their conscious or unconscious reproduction of the colonial stereotypical order.

The second issue, which is related to the first, addresses the question of the African's basic humanity. His statement refutes claims by most Western writers, philosophers and politicians that the African is devoid of any history, literature, culture or civilisation. In response to such myopic mind sets, he asserts the universality of human behaviour and responses to phenomena in an ontological setting. His work moves from the local to the universal. When asked to define his audience he said, "I would like to write primarily for the Zambian audience, then the wider African audience and thereafter for humanity as a whole" (Dominic Mulaisho, Lusaka, August 16, 1975). Ghanaian poet, playwright, short story writer and novelist Kofi Anyidoho had almost identical views regarding his primary audience. His comments:

> I should say my audience is Ghanaian in the first place, African in general and then after that the rest of the world. I write in English mainly. But then I find that just using English is one thing but to be understood is a different thing because most of the concepts maybe entirely foreign even to people who may have English as their mother tongue.
>
> (Kofi Anyidoho, Accra, July 19, 1974)

In East Africa, the Tanzanian playwright Peninah Mlama (September 9, 1974) is among a group of young writers who have decided to communicate with their audience through Kiswahili. She writes for the common people. She acknowledges that widespread illiteracy in her society limits the scope and range of her audience. As a result, she has chosen drama and theatre as the most effective medium for reaching her target audience. She is quick to point out that traditional theatre in the form of *ngoma* and traditional poetry have a large following, but not drama. The reason for this situation is that drama in current usage is mainly an offshoot of the Western educational system. Consequently, her audience is narrowed down to the educated or school-going people. This is the type of audience who are equipped to appreciate modern drama as an art form. She identifies a tension between traditional theatre and play production based on the Western model. She told Nichols at the time of her interview that there was debate on whether to promote traditional theatre or discard drama. She identified the high cost of producing plays and taking them to where the people live as a major obstacle to the popularisation of drama. Her motivation to write and produce plays is based on two distinct reasons

> First of all, the audience I am addressing is a Kiswahili-speaking audience. I don't see why I should write in English when I am talking to Tanzanians. And the second reason is that I express myself better in Kiswahili. I have tried to write in English and I have always found that it is very difficult to express myself. In fact I wish I could express myself in my vernacular Kikaguuru, because I can do that even better. There are some things which I want to say and I know there is a better expression in the vernacular than in Kiswahili.
>
> (Peninah Mlama, Dar es Salaam, September 9, 1974)

Mlama has considered writing in her first language Kikaguuru, but she settled for Kiswahili because her primary audience understands the latter language. She believes writing in Kiswahili is critical if Tanzanians in particular and East Africans in general are to develop their literature. In 1967, the Tanzanian government legislated Kiswahili to become the medium of instruction, the national and official language. Mlama stressed the need for an increased volume of writing in Kiswahili. She perceives a great need for textbooks in the educational system covering elementary to university levels.

> We are going to change everything to Kiswahili. So we are going to need Kiswahili literature in the schools, for the public and for the offices and for everything. We can say that we are moving from English to Kiswahili. But if we don't have the literature, we'll always find that we are at the same problem. So the more literature produced in Kiswahili the better.
>
> (Peninah Mlama, Dar es Salaam, September 9, 1974)

Her comments echo those made by Isola, Sofola, and Mulaisho among other writers on the significance of using indigenous languages in sensitising the common people about the central issues in their societies or worlds. To her the most important audience is the Kiswahili speaking audience essentially in Tanzania and the whole of the Eastern, Central and Southern Africa region. She suggests that any other audience that may need to access her work could do so through translation. Her writing focuses on those issues Tanzanians find problematic. She considers it her "duty to try to help the society either in showing where the problems are or trying to suggest solutions to the problems or at least to make the people aware that the sources of this and that problem are in this and that thing" (Peninah Mlama, Dar es Salaam, September 9, 1974). She is convinced that an African writer cannot afford the luxury of Art for Art's sake because the writer has her or his role to play in national development process.

Earlier in this discussion, I mentioned the tendency by some African writers writing in indigenous language to insist upon a strict observance of the traditional stylistic and structural devices. There was a literary battle between Abdilatif Abdalla (September 8, 1974) of Kenya and Euphrase Kezilahabi (September 7, 1974) of Tanzania concerning the use, place and relevance of traditional Swahili stylistic devices in Kiswahili literature. Both writers are poets using Kiswahili as their chosen medium of expression. Abdilatif Abdalla hails from the coastal area around Mombasa of a Swahili family which consists of fishermen, farmers, politicians and poets. He writes poetry using the traditional Swahili style. Abdilatif feels that no African writer should bother writing unless his or her writing has a definite message for his or her audience.

> Whatever message I have to give to my audience, must be a message which concerns their dignity and their way of life. For instance, looking at the background most of us Africans have been living in, you'll find out that the first thing is to politicise the

> audience. Because we have been living a life to the extent that an African started to despise himself or herself just because his skin is black and his hair is curly. Some of our people have been despising themselves just because they don't have the light or white skin. Now the first thing for the writer is to make his audience know who he is and to be proud of what he is. So I think that is the most important thing. You have to liberate his mind first in order to try and educate him in the other spheres.
>
> (Abdilatif Abdalla, Dar es Salaam, September 8, 1974)

These comments concur with what the majority of writers in this series are advocating. It is clear that the writers of the 1950s and 1970s had no time for Art for Art's sake because they perceived it to be a luxury they and their respective societies could ill afford in light of all the challenges of moving into the modern world. Abdilatif's comments seem to imply that African writers should be free to select appropriate purposes for their art. Yet Abdilatif insists on a faithful observance of the traditional grammatical rules governing Swahili poetry.

> A Swahili poem in order to be a poem, I should say, there are three things which the poet has got to follow. The first thing that a Swahili poem has got to have is a rhyme and rhyme in the last syllable at every line. The second is to have metres which we call in Swahili *Mizani*. The third thing is to be able to say what you want to say even if you have *Mizani* and rhymes, but if you fail to convey to the audience still is not a poem according to Swahili poetry standards.
>
> (Abdilatif Abdalla, Dar es Salaam, September 8, 1974)

Abdilatif refuses to recognise any poetry written in free verse as authentic Kiswahili poetry. He argues that as long as any writing does not follow the rules prescribed by traditional Swahili poetry standards governing rhyme and rhythm, it would never pass as poetry but as *Nyimbo* or song in English. He is ready to concede to change but such change has to be within the confines of traditional Swahili conventions. When it was suggested to Abdilatif that this was a rigid adherence to the formal aspects of traditional composition, he counteracted that " . . . even traditional Swahili poetry we have is not rigid. In fact if you look back to the history of Swahili poetry, you'll find that there have been changes. For instance, the poem which was composed in the 18th Century is different from the poem which we compose now" (Abdilatif Abdalla, Dar es Salaam, September 8, 1974). The focus of change seems to be problematic. Abdilatif appears to be comparing and contrasting synchronic and diachronic changes in language use.

But Euphrase Kezilahabi who represents the modern view would prefer more emphasis be put on contemporary language use and on content rather than on form and the mechanics of style. Kezilahabi deliberately decided to move away from the old forms and disciplines thereby pioneering a revolution within Kiswahili poetry. Both the traditionalists and all except one publisher rejected Kezilahabi's free verse form of poetry. The main reason was its non-conformity to the set style of Swahili poetry. Traditional Swahili poetry is popular along the coastal strip of East Africa. This region had enjoyed a relatively higher literacy rate than the hinterland during the pre-independence era because of the influence of Islam. As a result, its inhabitants find it easier to write this form of poetry than do their upcountry counterparts. Kezilahabi argued that it was unfair for traditionalists to insist on literary purity in a region where Kiswahili was being given a chance to establish itself as a national and regional language. In addition such insistence would mean that people would be forced to study Swahili literature instead of literature written in Kiswahili. Kezilahabi's efforts aimed at opening a door in this closed world of Swahili literature so that even those who were not native speakers of Kiswahili would have a chance to participate in writing and consuming this literature. He also hoped that the public would be encouraged to use Kiswahili in collecting traditional oral literature materials from across Tanzania. Kezilahabi states that Swahili literature has an essentially difficult vocabulary and syntactic structure which make the writing inaccessible. He advocates for the two types of writing to co-exist.

> I think they should go on writing. Some of the things written in the traditional form can be written by people who are fluent speakers of Kiswahili. But there should be room for people who only have Kiswahili as a second language to write and think in. There should be room to include also oral literature and make it part of the national property.
>
> (Euphrase Kezilahabi, Dar es Salaam, September 7, 1974)

Kezilahabi strongly believes the quality of a writer's work will be greatly influenced by the type of audience he is writing for. As such, a writer is not quite free to do whatever he wants to do. Obi Wali's (Kampala, Uganda, 1962) observations about the stifling effect the use of foreign languages had on African literature are appropriate to this situation in which Kiswahili is almost like a foreign language to upcountry populations. Language is once again used to deny a large potential audience access to literature.

Some African Literature Curricular Initiatives

Ola Rotimi observes that the new literature curriculum in Nigeria has renewed interest in literature among writers and the audience.

> The educational institutions are now reorienting their syllabuses to suit the African millieux. Gone are the days when say, the West African School Certificate student would be expected to study Jane Eyre, or Pride and Prejudice, Sheridan and Blake and English writers, the substance of whose writing sometimes meant nothing to us. Now the West African School Certificate and the GCE syllabuses are being oriented to allow for the study of the African authors. So you'll find plays of Wole Soyinka, J P Clark; the novels of Achebe, Ngugi and others being read in place of Oscar Wilde, Goldsmith and Browning.
>
> (Ola Rotimi, Ile-Ife, July, 1974)

He suggests that with this changed attitude on the part of African educational authorities, more African writers would be encouraged not only to write for the sake of being read but they will also produce a literature of such enhanced quality that might eventually effectively replace the Blakes, Brownings and Oscar Wildes of yesteryears.

In the following section, I describe and relate the comments made by the writers in the Lee Nichols interviews to the Kenyan language policy situation. This will ground the writers' primary concerns against their historical origins. The debate between Abdilatif and Kezilahabi concerning the question of language and literature finds an interesting manifestation at the national level in the Kenyan educational system. The debate on the language of expression took a dramatic turn in Kenya in the 1968/1969 revolution at the University of Nairobi. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the late Henry Owour Anyumba, Taban Lo Liyong and the late Okot p'Bitek categorically called for the abolition of the English Department to be replaced by the Department of Literature. They advocated the total rejection of the continued marginalisation of African literature in an independent African country. A striking feature in the proposal was the centrality that oral literature would have in the envisaged curriculum. Bernth Lindfors (1995) observes that the Kenyan literature curriculum revolution had far-reaching consequences in Anglophone Africa

> leading to similar, but usually more limited, experiments in Africanizing the syllabus. Today, most English or Literature Departments at Anglophone universities have achieved what they regard as a "balance" between the old colonial curriculum and the new, indigenous post colonial one, but definitions of what constitutes "balance" differ markedly from one corner of the continent to another. The Nairobi program remains the most radical transformation of literature teaching and literature study anywhere in Africa.
>
> (Bernth Lindfors 103)

Similar changes occurred at the University of Dar es Salaam. However, the situation was different in neighbouring Uganda. By 1982, twenty years after independence from British rule, Uganda still had a British literature curriculum (Lindfors, 1995).

The point of these citations is to emphasise that changes could be instituted at the conceptual level but they take a long time to be implemented at the institutional level. Although unique curriculum changes began at the University of Nairobi, the situation in the elementary and secondary school systems was markedly different. By 1973, ten years after Kenya regained her independence, the secondary and high school segments were still dominated by European teachers and curricula. These teachers were responsible for choosing set books to be studied at this level in the school system. It appears that this cohort of teachers was not too eager to implement changes to the literature syllabus. In 1974 the radical group of university lecturers initiated a "Conference of Teachers of Literature" held at Nairobi School to address the non-implementation of the suggested curricular changes the previous year. One of the recommendations was the appointment of a working committee empowered to evaluate the Kenyan schools literature curriculum. The Committee's findings were presented in 1976 in a paper entitled: "Teaching of Literature in Kenya Secondary Schools - Recommendations of the Working

Committee." This paper heightened the acrimonious debate about literature which had continued since the famous University of Nairobi debate of 1968/69. The following four broad areas were singled out for urgent examination:

(a) the relevance and appropriateness of the educational system to the Kenyan situation;
(b) democratisation of the decision making processes;
(c) indigenisation of the teaching staff; and
(d) the ideological orientation of literature teaching in Kenya.

The Committee rejected the Eurocentric worldview to literature teaching in the Kenyan context. It recommended that literature teaching was to begin from the known to the unknown, that is, from the Kenyan, East African, African, Asian, Latin American contexts to the rest of the world. This curricular vision foregrounded the teaching of Kenyan, African, Asian and post colonial literature while simultaneously downplaying the teaching of Eurocentric literatures. The Kenyan interrogation of questions of negative inscription of the African in literary works was the precursor to the Non-Aligned Movement's international articulation of the same concerns. The writers that Lee Nichols interviewed focused on the questions of relevance of the literature taught and the media through which they were expressed. Their comments on the latter issue suggest that meaningful communication will occur only when the media of expression are indigenised.

Despite Kenya taking a leading role with regard to literature curriculum innovation, it appears that the authorities have decided to adopt a middle of the road position with regard to the question of the media of expression and instruction in the educational system. The language issue in Kenya is made even more problematic in that educational survival and mobility are perceived to depend on a student's mastery of communicative competence in English language. In the revised syllabus of 1992, English language teaching is defined to include literature teaching. Language and literature are assumed to be complementary. Literature teaching is supposed to grow out of and enhance language learning. It would appear that the planners expect students to develop an appreciation of literature and eventually exhibit literary competence skills (Jonathan Culler, 1975).

RAL, (1992)[10] contains insightful articles that critically analyse the vexatious language issue in African countries. Mazisi Kunene in "Problems in African Literature" superbly discusses the philosophical-cum- ideological and cosmological sense making dimensions of language. Inherent in language are the dimensions of power and control which were discussed in detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation. The writers interviewed in this series of conversations have presented various aspects of these concerns with specific reference to publishing and readership. The Kenyan teacher of English language and literature in English has to overcome numerous complex issues posed by the teaching of the two subjects. Whenever a second language is the medium of instruction and a subject on the curriculum, it would appear prudent to teach about its structure and sociolinguistic dimensions.

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[10] *Research in African Literatures* (RAL) is a scholarly journal of the African Literature Association (ALA) based in the USA through which African and Africanist scholars interrogate topical issues and concerns in the teaching, studying and researching of African literatures world-wide.

The Kenyan teacher of literature in English and English language has to develop strategies to help resolve two problems; (i) how to handle a second/third-cum-foreign language; and (ii) how such a language is to mediate the complex cultural phenomena that national literatures discuss. In addition, teachers have to figure out how to handle issues relating to what Mary Louise Pratt calls "conventions of representation" (in Van Peer 16-34). These issues include the power of text in providing models of social experience for the reader (Christopher Sauer in Van Peer 82) and the dialogic nature of texts (Bakhtin 1981).

The Multilingual Complex

Embedded in the language/literature dichotomy are problems cultural purveyors encounter as a result of multilingualism on the African continent. Many African nations have yet to effectively respond to the following two concerns: (a) choice of an appropriate medium of instruction and (b) the type(s) of English the school system should nurture and the selection criteria of such English(es). Research in sociolinguistics indicates that it is a fallacy to talk in terms of a standard language yet many African countries remain faithful to the teaching of a strict "Received Pronunciation" (RP) type of English, a Southeast of England dialect of British English which was adopted as the standard English in the middle of the twentieth century in Britain. The approach consists of an unswerving adherence to the grammatical structure of British English but without due attention being paid to the tremendous sociolinguistic changes affecting British English. Arnold in an article entitled "Preface to a History of Cameroonian Literature in English" records the negative effects stressing the teaching of grammatical structure has on literary creativity in Cameroon. A similar situation existed in Eastern Africa earning the region the dubious reputation of being a literary desert.

The Kenyan teacher of language and literature expressed in the language encounters grave challenges in teaching these two subject areas because of using a traditional methodology. These teachers do not have room to pursue creative writing because of a content heavy curriculum that stresses acquisition of certificates. The relationship between literature and language echoes a similar one between reading and writing. Sternglass (1987) traces three broad models that represented reading and writing as (i) parallel processes from 1930's to 1970's, (ii) interactive processes from 1970's to the early 1980's and (iii) transactional processes from the early 1980's onwards. It would appear that most African countries consider literature and language as parallel processes that should remain separate. The transactional model has been very influential in literacy and writing studies. Britton *et al.* (1975) Thomson (1987), Dixon (1975), Rosenblatt (1938, 1978) and Reid (1974) have been vibrant voices in this debate which focuses on the diverse contexts of interaction surrounding writers, readers and texts. Writers interviewed in "Conversations with African Writers" in discussion of creative writing repeatedly pointed out that a rigid adherence to traditional methodology had a stifling effect on creative writing processes.

The studies cited above emphasise the strategies employed by native speakers of English in their reading and writing processes. It should be pointed out that linguistic inquiry has tended to use the sentence as its largest unit of analysis while ignoring extra or supra sentential units and the role such units play in meaning making (Van Peer 4). Noguchi (1991) argues for a critical reduction of time spent on grammar in the teaching of writing among native speakers of English language. Such an approach is essentially limited in that it does not account for textual organisation.

English language and literature in English teaching in Kenya stresses grammar and thematic explications respectively. This practice tends to ignore the socio-cultural dimensions of the two subject and discipline areas that the studies seem to advocate. African teachers of literature in foreign languages find themselves in a difficult situation because the they do not have mother tongue proficiency as well as the sociolinguistic dimensions first language speakers have. Because of the latter sociolinguistic hurdles, many teachers encountering problems posed by textuality and intertextuality oftentimes do not adequately handle them in literary studies. The history of literature teaching in most Kenyan schools reveals focus has been placed on the individual text without adequate attention being paid to contextualising the work in its generic and historical context.

The implications of the relationship between and among texts in society are yet to be critically examined if creative writing is to advance in educational systems in most African countries. There is need to thoroughly investigate the linguistic and literary concepts and methodological strategies used by the African literary writers, scholars and teachers of foreign languages and the literature expressed in them. Such an investigation may illuminate our comprehension of the relationships that enmesh the writer, audience, politician and their societies together. One way of conducting such an investigation would involve the critical examination of the languages of expression, content, theme, genre and media of communication in African writing of the 1960s and 1970s. "Conversations with African Writers" compiles the writers' comments and views on these cardinal dimensions of creative writing. Teachers of foreign languages and literatures expressed in them operating in a multilingual context must be careful not to yield to the temptation of becoming parochial in an attempt to decentre the literary paradigm. Mary Louise Pratt in discussing the literature/language dichotomy succinctly captures the tone and tenor of "Conversations with African Writers" regarding the creation of social reality through symbolic means in her critique of mainstream Western literary practice:

> The foregoing discussion will doubtless have communicated a set of ideological commitments of my own - a criticism of discourses that implicitly or explicitly dehumanise, trivialise and devalue other realities in the name of Western superiority, and an appreciation of discourses that do not do these things and instead acknowledge the limitations on the part of the West's ability to make sense of other peoples and places (especially those it seeks to hold in subjugation). Some may wish to argue that such commitments have no place in academic investigations, or in linguistics, but I think they are wrong. To begin with, that argument is obviously as ideologically committed as my own. More generally, any discourse has ideological dimensions - values - just as it has aesthetic and sociological ones. Poetics and sociolinguistics are equipping us with a stylistics that can deal with these latter two dimensions. Ultimately, we will need a stylistics that can deal with the first one too.
>
> (Van Peer, 1988).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCERNS, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN AFRICAN WRITING OF THE 1950S TO 1970S

The previous chapter documents that writers interviewed in "Conversations with African Writers" considered the issues of audience, language and intent of African writing of the 1950s to 1970s to be the central motivation in their creative writing endeavours. The writers' comments consist of the strategies they employ in resolving the inherent tensions in their work. The writers also discuss what they perceive to be the pressing concerns, problems and challenges in African writing for this period. Most of the writers identified difficulties encountered in making writing a vocation, lack of publishing firms, and political intolerance as the major issues they confronted during these decades. The issues singled out by the writers will be the focus of this chapter. As a means of facilitating a description and discussion of these three areas of concern, Nichols asked the writers to talk about how they began writing. They repeatedly mentioned how radio broadcasting motivated and initiated them into writing works of fiction.[11] Cyprian Ekwensi from

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[11] Many of them have been broadcasters, producers, and animators or have run radio programmes in their respective countries. Some of them have fond memories of how radio broadcasting helped expose their works to local and international audiences. Radio and television diffusion continue to give the writers wider exposure on the continent through the Union of National Radio and Television Networks of Africa (URTNA). I discuss the role radio broadcasting played in the literary and educational endeavours on the African continent in Chapter Five.

Nigeria (August 9, 1974) started his writing career as a student in secondary school where he was an editor of a magazine. He attributed his desire to write to his interest in reading and writing that was stirred by Dr. Christopher Okoije who encouraged his students to read and dramatise stories they had read. The dramatisation of excerpts added inspiration to the enjoyment they derived from the exercise. Ekwensi adds, " . . . I could not at that time believe that these stories which we read were fiction, that they were invented by anybody. We accepted them as truth. And later on, I gradually began to know that you could do these things."

Issue of financial support

Cyprian Ekwensi has worked as a teacher, a pharmacist, and a broadcaster with the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation where he became Director of Information for the then Federal government in 1961. In light of his extensive experience, Lee Nichols asked him to comment on what he perceived to be some of the major problems confronting African writing. He identified three basic problems the African writer writing between the 1950s and 1970s encountered. The basic problem is that African writers can not make a living out of their writing. Conditions dictate that they find employment elsewhere with writing acting as a subsidiary involvement. Depending on writing is definite starvation for the writer. Bessie Head, the author of A Question of Power responding to the same question pointedly states:

> I've been a bit envious of what writers have and can get in America, the kinds of encouragement like grants to carry out writing for a whole year or six months and not to worry about financial details. I have felt that very badly because it is extremely very difficult to live on one's writing. I, as a side line, keep a little vegetable garden going and I do some peddling and that brings me a little bit of petty cash, but it is a tremendous struggle for me to keep going.
>
> (Bessie Head, Serowe, September 25, 1976)

Kitts Mbeboh (Yaounde, July 24, 1975, July 15, 1978) of Cameroon emphatically says, " . . . If a writer were to depend on his work entirely in the society, I assure you he will die." He goes on to say that anyone writing in Africa must be a committed writer and not a person motivated by financial gains. His countryman Guillaume Oyono-Mbia (Yaounde, July 24, 1978) agrees with him by saying, " . . . when there is a system whereby established writers will have the means to write without having anything else to do, the situation will greatly improve." Personal indigence can make writing even more of a difficult undertaking. Phola Dube (Kwaluseni, August 29, 1976) of Swaziland says: " . . . you might need some paper to write on. All these things you have to get yourself. I find it very difficult. I have to hire my own typist. There is just no help from anybody." South African Bessie Head tells of how an American publisher sent her US $80.00 for the purchase of paper to launch her into her writing career. These are desperate words and situations. It appears that the African writers of the 1950s to 1970s considered themselves to be voices in the wilderness like John the Baptist. In a way, these writers find themselves almost ostracised and in a metaphorical way they too have to feed on wild honey and locusts just as John the Baptist did when he called his society to repentance and service to God (Holy Bible, Mt. 3:6,11; Mk. 1:4,5; Lk. 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4). John was a voice in the wilderness calling an obstinate people to seek righteousness.

Freedom of Expression and Gatekeeping Functions

Repression of freedom of speech and ideas sometimes manifests itself in overt and less brutal ways. The most common version is censorship by reviewers and publishers as they conduct their normal editorial functions. Some of the writers in the Nichols interview series expressed their exasperation at the effects of censorship on their craft. Censors exist at various levels in the book preparation process and they act as filters that ensure certain ideas, values, and quality of books are published. Oftentimes, censors weed out all content with a powerful political timbre, an incriminating theme or descriptions that are considered socially offensive and morally corrupting, especially if such descriptions relate to sexual matters. Akiwumi Isola had to change the manuscript to his book O Le Ku:

> There was a particular scene of a boy and his girl friend in a room lying down on a bed discoursing amorously. The publishers thought that this would not be tolerated in the schools because only small boys are going to study this and this may be a very bad influence on them. So I agreed with them . . . that particular section was cut off. And by the use of special phrases, special proverbs that have double meanings, we were able to get over this problem. So the writer who writes in African languages has very little choice about what he says. He has to conform to the demands of the market and the publishers.
>
> (Akiwumi Isola, Lagos, July 28, 1974)

Akiwumi Isola's comments indicate that restricting the writers' expressive freedom may lead to further creativity in terms of content presentation.

However, editorial intervention by publishers can lead to drastic changes from what the writer intended. Foreign editors feel compelled to correct both the grammar and idiom of African literature written in foreign languages. They will exclude certain African cultural concepts from manuscripts whenever such materials are not accompanied by detailed explanations. Zulu Sofola uses her play King Emene to illustrate that structural changes will lead to content changes. She traces the origin of the problem to the varied meanings language generates and the social worlds created through symbolic means.

> It is this problem of language which makes the writer, the African writer clash with the publishing companies that are owned by Europeans. And when they take the script to London maybe to edit, you'll find that they start correcting certain

> sentences because they say it is not like that in the English language. But I feel they should allow us to get our own Nigerian English.
>
> (Zulu Sofola, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

Kalu Uka of Nigeria underscores the African artist's predicament in relation to freedom to be creative and productive:

> I would like to see the artists given the opportunity to mature and to say things which might benefit their society because just now in our society, the artist, especially the traditional artist whether he is a carver or a sculptor, he's almost left to die poor. He only gets rich after because he is given this posthumous recognition. I think the artist ought to be recognised now and if he is, then he can go on and really write. He is not an anarchist after all as many people tend to believe. But he is an alienated man and I think we should acknowledge that he is an alienated man. In fact without the alienation, he might not be able to write at all. So the future is something which I see as clouded up with the intolerance from the politicians, by the instability in these states which are like ours, the instability in being partly a result of ignorance. Education and enlightenment should be encouraged - and people can read more and with television coming and with radio already here with all the newspapers, I think that there is a great future for writing but we need tolerance, we need freedom, we need money.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4 1974)

Kalu Uka identifies immaturity, political intolerance and instability as characteristics that constrain the African artist's freedom of expression in various media. The lack of freedom of expression seemed to preoccupy African writers writing between the 1950s and 1970s. Grace Ogot (August 28, 1974) of Kenya suggests creating an enabling environment would release a writer to become a free agent who would be at liberty to write for or against " . . . a person, family, government, ethnic group, or religion." Writers in Africa have often found themselves pitted against powerful forces in their societies each time they have interrogated issues of freedom, equity and justice. Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kofi Awoonor among other writers have been jailed and detained without the due process of justice being followed. African writers are forced to deal with the prospect of incarceration and even death instigated by politicians. Recently, the world witnessed the brutal murder of Ken Saro Wiwa who championed the cause of his Ogoni people through his wriitng. Most of these writers perceive themselves as prophets who caution, warn and at times denounce a society that is forging ahead on the wrong path.[12] As a result of the confrontation between the writer and politician, many writers have to choose from among compliance, defiance, or going into exile and at times martyrdom. Dennis Brutus, Lewis Nkosi, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek, Abdilatif Abdalla, Masizi Kunene, David Rubadiri, Camara Laye, Nurrudin Farah among others have had to flee into exile for fear of their lives. Their writing has caused their respective governments to unleash brutal reprisals on some of them.

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[12] The contestation between the prophetic utterance and politicians is discussed in Chapter Three.

What options did the African writers of the period have in conducting the business of their vocation? Cyprian Ekwensi suggests that the African writer should be pragmatic and develop political sensitivity in a continent fraught with numerous problems and contentious parties. He also states that the African writers writing in this period had to demonstrate a sense of proportion in their investigations and interrogation of the topical issues of their day. Failure to do so would lead to very strained relationships with the political establishment of the day. He says

> Therefore, the writer must bide his time and write in a manner which, while exposing the truth, is also able to help achieve the end he is aiming at. It is no use messing up everything simply because you must write about it, because you will be defeating the very end you are setting out to achieve.
>
> (Cyprian Ekwensi, Enugu, August 9, 1974)

Locating a Publisher

Albert Kayper-Mensah (Accra, July 20, 1974) goes on to reveal that having one's work published abroad gives the writer broader exposure. It would appear that African writers writing between the 1950s and 1970s showed an ambivalence with regard to having their works published by foreign publishing firms. Few options were available to them during this time. Using foreign publishing firms often assured the writers a wider audience and definite financial rewards. At the same time, they discovered that foreign publishers dictated the type of writing they could pursue. Peninah Mlama (Dar es Salaam, September 9, 1974) of Tanzania discusses the difficulties arising from an undue reliance on foreign owned publishers. The problem is worse whenever an African writer submits a manuscript written in an indigenous language because the foreign multi-national firm is primarily interested in securing a viable market and a return on its investment. She says, "They know when you bring them a Swahili manuscript, you have only an East African audience. So their priority is something which can sell world-wide." It would appear that the African writer writing in the period between the 1950s and 1970s experienced problems in finding a local and indigenous publisher. Imperialism continues to frustrate African writers' desire to have their works published in their native tongues and countries. Phanuel Egejuru states:

> A number of the writers are still bound by contracts to foreign publishers. On the surface there is nothing intrinsically wrong with publishing overseas, but the problems are hidden and can be exposed to show that foreign editors and publishers do influence a writer's art. More often than not, they decide which book will sell among their home audience, and if they feel that a book may not appeal to the foreign market, that book may never be published.
>
> (Egejuru, Towards African Literary Independence 1980:55)

Egejuru's conclusion echoes Ekwensi who maintains that finding an understanding publisher is another major problem African writers have to contend with:

> There are lots of printing establishments setting up but publishers are still few and far between. For the writer, my own advice would be to try and expose your work as much as possible by getting on the international network. But at the same time you must have your roots at home because eventually, this is where you belong. Recognition in your own home is, I think, one of the biggest achievements and this also brings about recognition outside. But it can also work the other way round.
>
> (Cyprian Ekwensi, Enugu, August 9, 1974)

This quotation sheds some insight on the issue of creativity and audience reach and reception. The publisher and the distribution network will often determine the fame and popularity of a writer. Ekwensi seems to suggest that African writers would be served best if they had their works published by established international publishers who have the prerequisite resources to prepare and present a writer's work to global audiences. This does not imply that writers who have their works published locally are doomed to fail. He points out that writing has become an integral part of the lives of Nigerians and Africans giving rise to a reading public and culture. He feels that interest in reading and writing stems from the human desire to be enthralled and enchanted by the spectacular, scandalous, and ebullient things in society - a desire to learn something about other people in our midst. He feels that there is considerable promise for the future of writing not only in Nigeria but also in the rest of Africa. This view is based on the fact that Nigeria and other African countries were experiencing tremendous, social, political, and technological changes which exposed shifting power relationships among the various contending groups in African countries. Some of the changes consisted of rising literacy and information flows which enabled populations to access data with which to make meanings of their changing circumstances. This process propelled the continent onto the international scene.

Indigenous Publishing Firms

It would appear logical to suggest that if Africa had viable publishing houses, then the African writers' problems would diminish. Once one has written, one must find a sympathetic publisher. The general public may assume that as long as a writer has a manuscript, it is easy to find a publisher. However, the writers reveal that getting a publisher is a process that involves negotiating diverse power relations. As mentioned in some of the quotations above, the writers discuss how they have had to negotiate with publishers to have some of their work accepted for publication.

A large number of writers in this series expressed a sense of frustration because of the lack of or very limited number of locally owned and operated publishing houses in their countries. Repeatedly, they stressed that the few foreign publishing houses were reluctant to publish any work they considered to have a limited local appeal. Such works would include manuscripts written in indigenous languages and those not likely to be prescribed as set books in the school system. Works that exhibited these two characteristics were unmarketable and consequently unpublishable. The writers were of the opinion that the non-existence or scarcity of indigenous publishing houses had a very negative effect on their creative endeavours. Peninah Mlama, expresses this view succinctly when she says:

> The biggest problem for Swahili writers is getting published because we don't have many publishing firms. And in most cases we depend on foreign publishing firms. So when you come to write in Swahili and go to such a firm which is world-wide - you only have an East African audience. Their priority is something which can be sold to the world. Whereas, if we had more publishing firms we could write things which could be read in East Africa.
>
> (Peninah Mlama, Dar es Salaam, September 9, 1974)

R. D. Molefe of Botswana describes of the paralysing sense of intimidation that writers in the Southern African region had to operate under, not daring to write anything that would annoy the South African apartheid regime. His comments on self censorship are self explanatory

> You'll find that we have no publishers, we have no printers in Botswana. We in Botswana depend on South Africa. If one wants to criticise something, you have to make sure that if you were to speak about South Africa that you don't annoy them because the printers are in South Africa and they would never publish that because their government would be against them.
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> (R. D. Molefe, Gaborone, September 26, 1976)

Many aspiring writers do not bother to embark on serious writing because of the lack of a viable local publishing infrastructure. Writers who are daring enough have two avenues through which they can have their works published. First, they can submit their manuscripts to a government controlled press. Second, they may approach a foreign controlled and owned publishing house to take control of the entire manuscript processing and marketing. In both situations, the writer loses control of both the artefact and the content. Some of the writers interviewed in the Lee Nichols programmes were forced to assume the responsibility of publishing, marketing and distributing some of their books. One such writer is Bai Tamiah Moore (Monrovia, July 12, 1975) who was not daunted by the fact that in 1968 there were no publishing houses in his native Liberia. He mimeographed his manuscript Murder in the Cassava Patch and sold a sufficient number of copies to have the book published privately in Holland. Initially, he printed 2500 copies of Murder in the Cassava Patch which he, together with a group of friends, peddled on the streets of Monrovia. Although he later on convinced the government to prescribe the book to be studied in the school system, he feels that the Liberian writer does not receive the necessary support from the government.

Sometimes a government may offer to assist writers find publishers. The writer is expected to relinquish any control over book publication to the government agency responsible for book production or procurement in the country. Phola Dube's case is one of the most amazing examples of total government intervention in manuscript processing. On completing high school, he submitted his first play to the Swazi Ministry of Education which was in need of books written in Siswati for the school system. He did not know what had become of his manuscript until " . . . one day, my father who was working at the Ministry of Education came in and showed me a copy of my play which he had been given by the Inspector of Seswati. The play had already been published by the Far Eastern Publishers Company in Singapore" (Dube, Kwaluseni, August 29, 1976).

This incident raises the question of copyright ownership, control relationships and the disempowering of writers. Phola Dube's play had already been published without any consultations made with the playwright. The event points to the likelihood of open-ended editorial intervention by both the Swazi Ministry of Education and the publisher thereby changing the content of the play. Phole Dube does not indicate whether his manuscript had been respected by the Swazi Ministry of Education. This is particularly critical in Dube's case because he says his purpose in writing is " . . . to expose certain things in life which people might be avoiding talking about or things which people might not have been aware of. That's my main goal in writing. I am going to expose anything I think should be exposed" (Phola Dube, Kwaluseni, August 29, 1976). Phanuel Egejuru in Black Writers: White Audience succinctly addresses the African writer's predicament when she declares:

> Until African countries establish publishing houses to handle materials in African and international languages, African writers will continue to sell to foreign publishers and please a foreign readership. This simply means that both the African writer and African literature will remain enslaved to foreign presses. The writer's artistic potentiality is very much undermined by the exigencies of the foreign editor who determines the language and the format, and to a great extent the theme. African literature will be static because the writers are constrained to produce works which would sell in the country where the book is produced.
>
> (Egejuru, Black Writers: White Audience 1978:40-1)

Egejuru's pertinent comments focus on the stunting influence a foreign readership has on the development of both African writing and publishing houses. The condition of African publishing and readership is made even more desperate when one considers the effects of widespread illiteracy on the continent. In addition, even literate Africans are not in the habit of buying and reading books. Yulisa "Pat" Maddy of Sierra

Leone feels that the small local audience works against encouraging the African writer of fiction. He agrees with writers like Cyprian Ekwensi who suggest that for African writers to be widely known, they must use the services of a foreign publisher.

> There are printers in this country but you know if I want to have my own work published, who are the people who are going to buy them? I mean we would want to have books printed in Britain, in America, rather than to have a locally printed publication. . . . although we are independent, our ideas are not.
>
> (Yulisa "Pat" Maddy, Freetown, July 2, 1975)

One may argue that writers could still have their works widely read by school going people through local libraries. In most instances, existing libraries neither carry interesting and relevant reading materials nor replenish their holdings because of two plausible reasons. First, this situation obtains because most of these institutions were inherited from the former colonial masters who had stocked them with Eurocentric cultural fare. Second, many African countries do not have viable local publishing houses in addition lacking the financial resources to import books. Yulisa "Pat" Maddy's question points to the bigger issue of a negative self image in the African psyche, to questions of authenticity and the formation of a genuine African identity. Both Pat Maddy and Phanuel Egejuru agree that foreign publishing companies will inevitably act as the cultural purveyors and vetters on the African creative writing scene by imposing Eurocentric artistic and cultural values.

Changes in Genre

No matter how much some African writers may consider themselves to be part of the international literary community, at times they have to contend with restrictive paradigmatic barriers. Western cultural purveyors in the form of editors and publishers resist entry by non-western writers into certain genres of writing. Sometimes publishers will reject a manuscript from a writer whose work they have published before if that writer were to change from one form of writing to another even while writing in the same genre. It would appear that publishers have certain requirements and expectations that writers must fulfil. Kole Omotoso (Ibadan, Nigeria, July 31, 1974) encountered frustration from Heinemann publishers when he began writing in the spy thriller form on the activities of the South African Bureau of State Security (BOSS), an espionage and counter espionage body that has inimical designs on the rest of Africa. His intention in starting a series under the title Fella's Choice was to use the series to sensitise the people of Africa about the clandestine activities of BOSS. He completed the manuscript in

> seventy one and passed it on to my publishers Heinemann, who had published my first two novels. Understandably enough, they wouldn't have anything to do with it. I also sent it to Collins in Glasgow and they said they wouldn't publish it. So I have had to bring it home and Ethiope, a publishing firm based in Benin, is bringing it out.
>
> (Kole Omotoso, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

This incident is a good example of censorship at both the conceptual and institutional levels. It seems that this otherwise progressive international publishing firm was hesitant to appear to be promoting an African spy thriller that had wilful and creative African narrative agents who seem to defy the standard stereotypical representations of the African. It should be noted that Fella's Choice had shifted in its theme and focus on African problems. The content interrogates the perennial cycle of intra and inter African conflicts with an effort to historicise the origins of these conflicts.

Western transnational publishers wield tremendous power over the content and style of African writing even into the 1990s.[13] One is almost forced to conclude that any African writer who not only goes beyond a mere questioning of racist conceptions of Africa but also establishes the authenticity of African culture and civilisation will encounter resistance for attempting to shift the Western cultural paradigm concerning Africa. Ndabaningi Sithole of the then Rhodesia recounts similar experiences with regard to his novel The Polygamist which he wrote while in detention without trial. The manuscript was smuggled out of his prison cell in piecemeal fashion. It was first submitted to two British publishers and then to an American firm which turned it down. Another American publishing firm accepted the manuscript for publication. The Polygamist explores the question of cultural transformation caused by colonialism in Rhodesia. In this novel, Sithole presents the African society as one that has a definite social order with its own sense of decorum which gives the people a coherent orientation in their dealings with each other. When asked to comment on the themes and preoccupation of creative writing published out of Rhodesia he says of the books

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[13] Ayi Kwei Armah's experience illustrates the extent to which this power will stifle literary creativity. His problems began when his writing shifted onto highlighting imperialism as the cause of the corruption and other political crimes and excesses in Africa in addition to emphasising the authenticity of African civilisation. His latest novel, *Osiris Rising* explores the theme of political corruption in emergent African nation states and establishes that Africa should reassert her roots in Egyptian civilisation which incidentally was African in essence. This novel appeared in 1996 almost twenty one years after *The Healers*. *Osiris Rising* is published in Senegal by "a group of friends."

> **They depict the human scene but one thing that was quite apparent was that these works completely excluded anything to do with racial questions in Rhodesia. Then I realised that the sponsor of these novels was a semi-government literature bureau which of course would not allow the sponsoring of anything that had political themes.**
>
> **(Ndabaningi Sithole, Lusaka, August 17, 1975)**

Ndabaningi Sithole reports that one day, the Rhodesian prison forces raided the cells and took away a completed novel and a poetry anthology of over two hundred pages both of which have never been returned to him. What makes this infringement on his person even more painful is the fact that every evening, he had to spend up to five hours writing in his unlit cell.

Local recognition and acceptance

Kalu Uka (Nsukka, August 4, 1974) suggests that anyone who writes is to some degree an extrovert who desires to be noticed. Such people would like the quality of their work acknowledged and appreciated by their contemporaries. He feels that a lot of damage is caused by caustic criticism directed at aspiring writers. Critics oftentimes dismiss the writers' efforts as too experimental, obscure, or simply lacking in artistic and entertainment value. He suggests that people should show some interest in the work of budding writers as a means of motivating them to improve. His writing interests were kindled as an undergraduate at Ibadan University College in 1960.

> We had a student poetry magazine called The Horn, in which if you were considered as one of the more brilliant students you naturally contributed. I contributed poems there and I was told by one of the editors, Professor J. P. Clark, they felt the efforts were useless. Then we formed a group - they called us hot-headed students - but felt we were doing something new - called The Renaissance Group meant to do African writing. It was partly in reaction to our curriculum then which was heavily British, and found to our surprise that we were very much encouraged by our Head of Department Professor Molly Mahood who gave us all the support and funds to run a magazine called The Horn.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

Stressing the importance of positive reinforcement, he mentions that Wole Soyinka, then in Ibadan, discerned some promise in his work, but pointed out that there was need for more hard work. Soyinka's comments which motivated this group of determined neophytes alluded to the questions of talent and skill. Uka says, "we went on to write more poems. We found out that we had become regular contributors to The Horn, The Horizon, The Ibadanians and to all sorts of things" (Nsukka, August 4, 1974).

These students were encouraged by the positive atmosphere at Ibadan which engendered a sense of collegiality among them. This collegiality spurred them to practice their creative writing interests and resulted in the development of a writer like Kalu Uka. Cyprian Ekwensi suggests that aspiring writers ought to seek the services of a foreign publisher if they are desirous of an international audience and the subsequent reputation. Uka feels that aspiring writers are demoralised by the lack of appreciation and meaningful engagement between the writer and the local audience. He also mentions financial remuneration as a contributory factor that aggravates the writers' sense of frustration:

> A large section of our society doesn't seem to believe in itself. So Kalu Uka may write and Wole Soyinka writes but he has to get published in Europe. He has to get published in America, and it is only when the Americans and Europeans have said what a fabulous writer, what a good writer that people begin to say, "Oh yeah, who is he anyway?" That kind of problem, I don't know how you'll ever solve it.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

Some of these writers perceive themselves as prophetic voices in their societies. Society's reaction seems to echo Jesus Christ's statement that a prophet is despised in his own country. Kole Omotoso, also from Nigeria, decries the lack of a conducive environment in which young writers can find expression. He considers this to be a critical problem that militates against developing young talent. He also cites the lack of a collegial atmosphere in which established writers would mentor neophytes as another negative characteristic of the Nigerian literary scene, " . . . the younger writers lack encouragement because African writers and Nigerian writers, the greatest number of them, live abroad.... and this is bad for the spirit of aspiring writers" (Kole Omotoso, Ibadan, July 31, 1974). From Swaziland, the then twenty-three year-old Phola Dube wonders why Swazi society seems to always despise their own:

> You find that people, maybe it is because of a colonial mentality, I don't know, but you find people don't want to support their local writers. They always want to read somebody maybe from America or Britain. They consider that their own people write something inferior. I wonder why. Is it so? It is useless to have people writing when the people of the country don't accept your works. I hope people may be able to discover themselves and then try to write something.
>
> (Phola Dube, Kwaluseni, August 29, 1976)

The negative attitude toward local writers lowers the morale and self esteem of young and would be writers. Potential writers are paralysed into inactivity.[14] Dube captures this sense of alienation when he claims that

> In Swaziland, people are just less interested in writing. It would be very, very good if we had other people to mix with and talk with about how to write and such things. But I find there isn't anybody I can mix with and discuss writing except for one friend of mine on the campus who is also trying to write quite a number of things. But what can I say, the youth of Swaziland should think very, very clearly about this kind of creative writing.
>
> (Phola Dube, Kwaluseni, August 29, 1976)

Stephen Arnold's article entitled "Preface to a History of Cameroon Literature in English" in RAL (1983), among other issues, addresses the status of literary production in Anglophone Cameroon. He documents what would appear to be low self-esteem among Anglophone Cameroonian writers and artists concerning their work. This article documents that Anglophone Cameroon has indeed produced literary works although under daunting conditions. He stretches the boundaries of the meaning attributed to publishing by including all works mimeographed and performed on radio and television. Arnold attributes the seemingly low production of works of fiction in Anglophone Cameroon to: (a) the British colonial policy of not teaching literature but only English "language and for purely utilitarian purposes"; (b) having a sparse population density which could not support a viable publishing industry; (c) lacking a university; and (d) isolation from the rest of the Commonwealth. In Arnold's view this trend has negative effects on literature whereby " . . . the literary models of style profferred in anglophone schools are classical and uninspiring; therefore, dead English and archaic and traditional themes prevail" (RAL 1983:510). There appears to be a general feeling among the writers interviewed in this series that their local audiences' inability or hesitation to accept their writing is both disturbing and discouraging. Perhaps the audience reacts in this manner because of the nature of the artists' calling. Kalu Uka of Nigeria adds an interesting dimension about the African creative artist, " . . . I think the artist ought to be recognised ... but he is an alienated man. In fact without the alienation, he might not be able to write at all." Phanuel Egejuru (1978) in her discussion of the content of African writing suggests that the sense of alienation in African literature written in European languages exists because the African writers address a double audience, African and European. Her comments regarding this type of writing:

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[14] A similar situation may have existed in East Africa which at one time was described as a literary desert.

> This general tendency to explain what should be taken for granted by a local audience and the attachment of a glossary are the outstanding facts that give away the African writer who claims to be writing solely for an African audience.... It is only the culturally alienated elite who need this kind of education and incidentally they have the same literary taste as their European bourgeois counterpart. Both of them want to see Africa other than what she is.
>
> (Egejuru 1978:136-7)

Discussion of the prophetic ministry revealed that the prophet was commissioned with an utterance that both proclaimed about a problematic contemporary event and predicted about future consequences arising from society's failure to heed the demands of the utterance. Perhaps what the writers perceive as negative reception by their indigenous audiences toward literary artistic productions is a manifestation of either the audiences' inability or refusal to comprehend the message or the writers' failure to speak in the idiom of the local people expressing the actual realities ordinary Africans encounter in their social worlds.

The writers' disposition is understandable when one considers that the African writer, or any person who takes up writing as a vocation, is often a lonely voice. Kayper-Mensah of Ghana in speaking about this alienation stresses the need for nurturing writers' clubs:

> Usually, when you start writing, you need friends who will be prepared to spend a little time and trouble of looking over your material. It is very difficult to come by such people. But we are hoping that in Ghana, the establishment of the national associations of writers will create pockets of individuals interested in these matters and that young writers will find friends in these groups and that young writers can be their own judges, form their own standards in deciding whether what they have written is worth publishing or not. We are encouraging all sorts of writing with possibility of funds being provided for publication - the hope is that its influence will soon be felt in the quality of encouragement it gives the writers. But they still need what outside recognition or assistance can be given.
>
> (Kayper-Mensah, Accra, July 20, 1974)

Composition and the Mechanics of Writing

Another concern which these writers identified, which is closely related to the question of acceptance and financial sustenance by the local audiences is the perception that the writing processes were problematic. The writers in these conversations speak to the pedagogical practise in which mechanics and all the other aspects of creative writing are not taught in many countries on the African continent. Since a large number of African countries were colonies of European imperialism, it would be logical to generalise that they have similar imperialistic institutions as the underlying structural framework.

The tendency in the inherited English language curriculum in countries like Kenya has been to teach the grammatical structure of the language. Teaching focuses on the memorisation of the structural features at the expense of the socio-cultural aspects of language. The implication arising from this practise is that teachers hardly have sufficient time in which to cover all the required content before students take their national examinations let alone devoting time to the teaching of expository and expressive writing skills. Reading and the teaching of creative writing suffer tremendous harm because there are very few writers' clubs or associations in Kenya and other African countries to encourage those with an urge to write fictive works of art. The writers in these interviews seem to suggest that existence of such clubs and groups would relieve the pressure on the school systems. However, Peninah Mlama of Tanzania feels that the problem of creative writing extends beyond the mere existence of supportive writers' groups or clubs to the fundamental question of craftsmanship or composition:

> During the past years there wasn't much help or guidance given in the school system to writers. So you find someone completing their school without knowing the principles of writing or how to go about writing. When people come to write, they just write out of their own interest. They may have good ideas to write about, but they don't know how to go about writing. You find many people attempting to write but then, after they have finished writing long manuscripts, you'll find their works cannot be considered for publication.
>
> (Peninah Mlama, Dar es Salaam, September 9, 1974)

Addressing the question of writing as a craft, Mlama suggests that it must be nurtured. Dependence on talent alone can not help African writers develop their writing skills. Zulu Sofola forcefully advocates the need for tutelage:

> There is an attitude I have observed in the country and I think it is not peculiar to Nigeria alone: that an artist is born, not made. True an artist must have the talent or else he will have nothing to work with. But on the other hand, there is such a thing as the skill. The one who already has the skill should guide the one who hasn't though he has the talent.
>
> (Zulu Sofola, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

It would appear the writers are appealing for the creation of a warm nurturing environment with the hope that such an atmosphere would cause the development or maturity of African writing. Concerns about money and publishers are only the prerequisites to the emergence of a viable and vibrant writing and reading culture on the continent. These writers recognise that talent without instruction will be short lived.

Themes on the Writer and the Politician

The African writer writing between the 1950s and 1970s encountered tremendous problems from what Ugandan Okot p'Bitek calls "the governors of our people." The fledgling independent African nation-states were governed by politicians who felt insecure in many ways. Almost all these writers in one way or another made their leaders nervous especially when the writers reminded the political leaders that they had comrades in the fight against the coloniser. The African writers writing during these two decades considered themselves to be part of the well-established resistance movement which began with Marcus Garvey and was propelled forward by Booker T. Washington, Kwameh Nkrumah, George Padmore, Claude Mackay and Jomo Kenyatta among other nationalistic stalwarts. Although the writers do not explicitly articulate this position, it is evident that they place themselves in the paradigm of writing that was critical of Western assumptions about the African. The politicians who assumed the reigns of power on the continent from the mid nineteen-fifties did not institute any serious conceptual and institutional changes to the imperialist system of governance. The writers on the other hand expected these changes to be implemented. The politicians' failure to extend their liberatory role beyond political emancipation to economic and cultural autonomy not only disappointed and frustrated the general public but also caused African writers and other progressive forces in society to challenge the political establishment. A great number of African writers have adopted a vibrant anti-colonial stance in their writing because the oftentimes negotiated/compromised political independence is cosmetic in nature having minimal effect on the inherited institutional framework.

Almost all these writers' works implicitly and/or explicitly counteracted Western racist assertions about the Africans' lack of manners, language, inventions, history, and culture. Emergent African writing interrogated the Enlightenment notion that the African was a barbarian in need of civilisation.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in an article entitled "Literature and Society," categorises literature about the African by European writers into three main trends namely

a) "great works" by the most outstanding European artists which form the European literary canon or the Great Tradition;

b) racist literature written by colonialist writers who essentially caricature the African. Notable titles in this type of writing include Karen Blixen's Out of Africa; Elspeth Huxley's The Red Strangers, A Thing to Love and The Flame Trees of Thika; Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines; Robert Ruark's Uhuru and Something of Value; Shakespeare's Othello and The Tempest; and Doris Lessing's The Grass is Singing; and

c) the liberal-cum-enlightened writers who present a false solution to the brutality of imperialism. This category contains books like Conrad's Nostromo and Heart of Darkness; Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson; and Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country.

Ngugi's strong anti-imperialistic position is a valiant attempt to correct the negative portrayal of the African narrative agents and the worlds that they populate. Ngugi's paper entitled "Literature and Society" was written in 1973, ten years after Kenya's independence and yet by that time, the majority of teachers in the secondary school segment were Europeans teaching literature of the British isles. Reference to the Kenyan situation is relevant in so far as it clarifies the sense of frustration felt by indigenous cultural purveyors in the post-independence era.

Artists have found themselves at the centre of political mediation. Discussion on the artists' role in traditional society indicated that they are compelled to actively participate in social affairs. From the contestation over power mediation between the writer and politician, the writer emerges as a lonely figure. Kofi Anyidoho's article entitled "Beyond the Communal Warmth: The Poet as Loner in Ewe Oral Tradition" (1995) is an informative summary of research he conducted investigating the artists' sense of loneliness. He suggests that Ewe poets perceive themselves as lonely or alienated people living on the fringes of society. He attributes the poets' sense of loneliness to their peculiar position which confers on them certain privileges while at the same time imposing severe restrictions. Anyidoho's analysis indicates that for the artists to perform their function in society they are compelled to assume an artistic garb - a pose through which they interrogate all forms of social power and the persons who inhabit the sites of power. Alienated from the political spectrum, poets are enabled to assume the role of moral critics of their societies.[15] In speaking to the relationship between the artist and the political leadership, John Johnson states " . . . poetry is employed as an act of communication and even defiance between individuals and groups which are marginal in the power structure of Somalia and those who hold power in that country. This communication often happens in situations that are very delicate and even socially volatile" (in Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature, 1995:111). He presents his research findings in four real life scenarios in an article entitled "Power, Marginality and Somali Oral Poetry: Case Studies in the Dynamics of Tradition." In the fourth scenario, Johnson narrates about a junior radio announcer at Radio Mogadishu who during a parliamentary stalemate, played a popular contemporary poem called *Leexo* over national radio which was heard on the parliamentary floor. The playing of this poem is accredited with influencing the casting of the crucial vote that brought about the fall of the government in power in Somalia at the time. Johnson records " . . . the next day you are arrested by the Criminal Investigation Division and charged with sedition against the state: influencing parliamentary voting with your choice of poem played over the airwaves. The word goes out far and wide: the poem 'Leexo' has brought down the government of Aadan Cabdulle Cismaan" (Johnson 1995:116-7). These illustrations drawn from the 1990s demonstrate that it is almost inevitable that the relationship between the prophet (writer) and the king (politician) is fraught with suspicion and oftentimes outright antagonism. The prophet/writer has felt that the king/politician has not treated him with the recognition and dignity he deserves. Pat Maddy of Sierra Leone succinctly captures this sentiment when referring to politicians:

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[15] **Ewe artists seem to be caught up in a situation from which they can not extricate themselves. They consider their vocation to be a gift from God the Almighty who requires absolute devotion and faithfulness. Anyidoho documents that Ewe poets are often forced into this divine calling. Many poets have tried to ignore the calling in favour of lucrative commercial enterprise which almost always fail to succeed. He says "... singers introduce to us the Ewe concept of *aya*, a kind of predestined poverty and misery" (Anyidoho, 1980).**

> They fail to understand that culture, literature is the mother of politics. If there is no culture, if there is no literature, I can not see how politics can really be strong. Because any sensible politician would work from the premise of his culture. Any sensible politician should be a father and mother of the artist because that is where his strength lies.
>
> (Pat Maddy, Freetown, July 2, 1975)

This statement categorically twins culture with politics. Yulisa Maddy suggests that the prudent politician would be a patron of the arts in recognition of the critical role that artists play in society. Maddy alludes to the importance of the politicians and writers being rooted and established in their cultural heritage - a situatedness that would help both to stay a steady course with regard to the governance of the people. Kona Khasu (Monrovia, July 11, 1975) insists that the politician has to collaborate with the artist in order to facilitate national unity and easy governance of the nation and the continent as a whole:

> Politics, I think, has to get a lot of support from the artist if the politicians want to, say, unite a particular area of the country. Unity is not just expressed in the constitution but in the whole thought process and sensibility of that thing. And I think this is where the writer is a tool, the writer then in that sense becomes a mechanism, a tool for helping this.
>
> (Kona Khasu, Monrovia, July 11, 1975)

One does not want to give the impression that these writers are suggesting that the African continent would be served best through the adoption of an isolationist policy. Their writing responds to the political, social, cultural, technological and educational changes shaping the continent. In recognition of the fact that African writing was in tandem with modernity, Ekwensi points out that:

> The earliest themes dealt with traditional society. Then succeeding that you had the themes on the man of two worlds. Later succeeded by the political theme. The new themes are now dealing with the technological and almost the electronic African. He is an executive like his counterpart throughout the entire world except that he just happens to be an African. He is internationally travelled, at an international conference and he's trying to find his way in the international context with all the problems of the economy and fuel shortage and energy crisis around him.
>
> (Cyprian Ekwensi, Enugu, August 9, 1974)

Ekwensi's description is a pointer to the changing face of African writing as African writers attempted to capture the evolution of change in African societies at the time. The writers interviewed by Nichols celebrate different aspects of the change taking place on the continent and give voice to the issues, challenges and concerns of the people. Their gaze into the myriad of forces changing the social, political, economic and cultural landscapes reveal different sites of contestation. The various dimensions of the change process enable readers to eavesdrop on and peek into the action. The insights captured by the writers will help readers shape their perceptions of reality about the social situation on the continent. There seems to be a consensus among these writers concerning the dramatic shift in the themes they write about. Most of them recognise that their societies expect them to actively participate in the process of comprehending change in pragmatic ways. The artists appear to be preoccupied with the present although this present is always contextualised. A lot more attention is focused on the modern or contemporary situation in its locality of occurrence. For example, Bessie Head's primary motivation is political and she deliberately engages the apartheid system exposing the " . . . dehumanising of the black people" (Botswana, September 25, 1976). She says that her focus is both on the present and the future with the intention of helping resolve the racial impasse apartheid has created in the Southern Africa region. She does not think that any one writer could claim to have the definitive solution to all the issues in her context. She contends that, " . . . you have merely offered your view of a grander world, of a world that's much grander than the one we've had already." She is cognisant of the fact that there are a variety of views in any human situation. These writers' involvement in the political spectrum of their countries mirrors that of the watchful prophet ever ready to proclaim, predict, intercede and communicate their messages and interpretations through symbolic means. Writers oftentimes are forced by circumstances to navigate through crossroads of tension.

Writing as Introspection

Writers like Akiwumi Isola, Charles Jow, Kona Khasu, Peninah Mlama, Okot p'Bitek, Taban Lo Liyong, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Ismael Mbise write about changing societal attitudes and values and the emotions they generate. Isola's writing delves into themes like barrenness, the interplay of power relationships, corruption in government circles, and the need to protect individual liberty in a changing society. Charles Jow from the Gambia focuses specifically on the theme of polygamy and its effects on women and children in a Muslim society and examining the power relationships that appertain. He says, " . . . It is the relationship of the mother to the child, the woman in the home, that I'm so much interested in exploring." He sees African writers of the 1950s to 1970s realistically describing their contemporary societies, warts and all. This writing has acquired a suppleness as the writers explore social relationships.

> There has been a sort of relaxation in the writing of young Africans. They're now not so much involved with writing about politics, about independence, about the colonial days, in heaping abuse on the European and how he raped and plundered Africa and destroyed what was an admirable society and all that. I think in a way African writers are becoming much more realistic and writing about their society as it is, not

> glossing over certain ills but showing their society like any other society which has its good and its ills.
>
> (Charles Jow, Banjul, July 4, 1975)

Kayper-Mensah observes that African writing between the 1950s and 1970s deals with the more philosophical and spiritual dimensions of life. The trend is toward a more reflective or critical examination of the material conditions and circumstances that surround life. The writer is becoming more introspective at a societal level. He states:

> The task of the content of cultural education in our institutions that task now is to be borne by the African. The terrible responsibility of getting something as good as Shakespeare is on us. This is a terrible responsibility because poetry must create a spiritual and intellectual environment in which we grow, about the relationship of man and the universe, man and man, the relationship between man and God, the relationship between the elder and the rest of the family, various relationships. And it is the job of the poet to put emphases on these concepts because that is where we link up with the rest of world culture and contribute what we can to the value of our own humanity which is to be rescued from the machine age.
>
> (Kayper-Mensah, Accra, July 20, 1974)

Kayper-Mensah would like to see African artists and educational institutions assume the full responsibility of catering to and for their societies cultural fare ranging from the spiritual and intellectual dimensions to the societal, familial, and interpersonal dimensions of life. He seems to suggest that African creative writing has essentially pragmatic and pedagogical characteristics that would liberate the African and the outsider Other from inferiority and superiority complexes respectively.

Kona Khasu examines the issues of self-consciousness and self-acceptance in his writing to cause Liberians and Africans in general to develop a positive and healthy self attitude. His approach consists of selecting fresh, positive images while discarding the stereotypical characterisation of the African personality. He hopes that the new African would be an individual worthy of emulation. In Homage to Africa, he perceives the storyteller/writer as that prophetic voice/ utterance advocating both national and Pan-African solidarity. He says

> . . . I try to create what I think are proper images for Africans, or at least the African that I would like to see develop in the next few years, to emulate. We define our terms differently from maybe the accepted mood because we feel that certain images have been blurred either by ourselves or by other people and unfortunately these images are being followed too closely today. And this creates a lot of problems. This is the theme of the play putting Africa's past, present and future in its proper perspective to be defined and understood by Africans themselves.
>
> (Kona Khasu, Monrovia, July 11, 1975)

His plays present both the positive and negative aspects of African life and experience. He places a lot of emphasis on particularising and localising his plays with respect to the African context. This involves recreating from materials that draw upon Africa's past to mould something contemporary. This may involve, for instance, the creation of works that encourage ethnic integration in his native Liberia. He hopes similar processes would eventually take place on the whole continent.

Kole Omotoso uses a similar approach whereby he interrogates the stereotypes that present an idyllic African society. He points out that African writing starting from around nineteen fifty-two to the early nineteen seventies largely undertook to explain Africans to the outsider non-African other. Considering the negative effects of this trend, he writes primarily to expose some of the social values, attitudes, hypocrisies and ills involving issues like inter-racial marriages and relations, child labour and abuse in Nigerian society because his purpose is to reveal

> the African to himself; putting in words some of the deepest, most telling experiences of the African to the African so as to give him words to describe himself, understanding himself, his own kind of turning and gazing at his own navel. In which case the subjects I deal with are pretty close to his skin, and which he might feel embarrassed to talk about or he might feel he'd rather leave alone. But I usually pick on pretty sensitive material.
>
> (Kole Omotoso, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

This dissertation does not explore the broader concerns and views of the writers interviewed by Lee Nichols regarding the negative images and perception colonialism engendered in the African personality or psyche. However, in their discussion of themes in African writing beginning in the 1950s to the 1970s, the writers comment on issues of race and racism. They acknowledge the impact of racism on the social and cultural aspects of life in their countries. Okot p'Bitek from Uganda addresses this phenomenon in his Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol by using satirical devices to help the African laugh at himself. An interesting development which merits further research is the emergence of intra textual characters in African writing of this period. Kona Khasu (Monrovia, July 11, 1975) admits that Africanus, the main narrative agent in his play Homage to Africa, is modelled after Ocol in Okot p'Bitek's Song of Ocol. This is a good development in that African writers have begun looking to other African writers as role models to emulate instead of always looking to Europe and America for inspiration. His comments:

> I think it is a very good development. Because in the past, nobody looked at any other African writers to say I was influenced by him. He wants to be influenced either by Faulkner or Milton or this person or that person. So I think it's a very good thing and I think it will continue, the interchange between African writers, the conferences, and this festival and that thing. All of these are bound to yield a closer communication among the writers and it will be easier then to get across the continent.
>
> (Kona Khasu, Monrovia, July 11, 1975)

Tanzanian dramatist Ismael Mbise (Toronto, September 30, 1974) distinguishes three broad writing trends in the Eastern Africa region. The first group consists of writers pioneered by Okot p'Bitek who utilise oral literature materials extensively for their craft in projecting to the future. Taban lo Liyong of Sudan is at the forefront of the second group which consists of writers who focus on cultural synthesis which involves a creative mosaic of various literary forms. The third trend of writing consists of writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o whose writing has taken on a strident theme of social responsibility and accountability at all levels of society. Mbise's compatriot Peninah Mlama explores themes on the effects of urbanisation and those dealing with individual and societal rights and responsibilities. She feels that the changed Tanzanian political situation has compelled her and other writers to explore political themes and the social changes prevailing in Tanzania. Some Tanzanian writers are collaborating with the government in popularising the philosophy of *Ujamaa* and socialism. These writers are actualising Edward R. Murrow's words cited in Chapter Two when he said, " . . . a nation that takes pride in its own culture, a people that takes pride in its own culture, believes in its own artistic merits, its accomplishments, its own artists, and who take pride in them would have pride in themselves and in building a nation." Murrow twins self esteem with nationhood.

In this chapter, I have described the problems and challenges that African writers negotiate as they navigate the cataracts and straits of creative writing in the murky African political, social, economic and cultural waters of change churning the continent. It would appear that an intolerant political system, hostile financial environment and a lack of nurturing writers' clubs or organisations have led to too many African writers being imprisoned, murdered or leaving the continent for exile in North America and Europe.

However, one remarkable characteristic is the courage and steadfastness with which they forge ahead in spite of awesome challenges and threats to their writing and personal well being. They are committed to ideals that ground their writing in their societies and give a vision of what may become of a people and continent that adamantly refuses to be silenced. The writers persist in giving voice not only to their individual personalities but also articulating the wishes, aspirations and hopes of the silent millions on the continent. These writers typify the definitions of the prophetic office as being persons who are called or those who call with an efficacious utterance to fellow human beings.

This dissertation presents a cross-section of the comments and views of writers writing in the 1960s. These writers discussed what they percieved to be the pertinent issues and challenges of their times. These enduring and endearing concerns have been the subject of extensive analysis by African and Africanist scholars since the 1960s - apparently indicating that the fundamental concerns have yet to be resolved.

CHAPTER FIVE

MASS MEDIA AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Foregoing analyses have concentrated on issues of audience, language, intention, concerns, problems and challenges of African writing from the 1950s to the 1970s. Many of the writers identified lack of financial, moral, and professional support to be some of the obstacles aspiring writers are bound to face. Even in the few instances where these conditions were met, writers encountered problems of a different nature. They spoke of the devastating effect political intolerance and absence of freedom of expression had on literary development on the African continent. Similarly, systemic curricular and institutional problems continue to impede literary growth despite scholars and writers having surmounted conceptual and attitudinal challenges.

This chapter devotes attention to analysing the circumstances and conditions that encouraged the writers interviewed in "Conversations with African Writers" to begin their writing careers. I make reference to the recruitment and training of traditional artists and the role they performed in their societies. Such a historical backdrop contextualises both the writers' comments and the primary focus of this study. The methods traditional artists used in communicating with their audiences are highlighted with a view to relating the comments of writers in

"Conversation with African Writers" to the practices of their traditional counterparts. Finally, I examine the role radio broadcasting and other media play in literary and cultural propagation.

In Chapter One of this dissertation, I mentioned that many African countries undertook massive development and restructuring of their economies when they regained their political independence from colonial subjugation. The political leadership realised from the outset that they had to make the inherited systems of governance relevant to the needs of the general population. Most African governments continue to establish and forge new alliances with different segments of society as a means to realising this goal as well as enhancing national development. The interpretation of development proves problematic because there are as many definitions as there are potential interpreters. Most of the definitions fail to include the cultural dimension. Arnold succinctly identifies and discusses this problem when he says:

> Development studies are technocratic in nature; they tend to treat humans as cyphers and often regard concrete problems as abstractions calling for technical solutions. They tend equally toward arid empiricism and brittle theoretical generalisations.
>
> (Arnold & Nitecki 1990:vii)

Concerning development studies specialists, Arnold concludes, " . . . culture is not sufficiently important to them as a factor in development until they have actually tried to apply their abstract learning in the field" (in Arnold and Nitecki ix).

Several studies have shown that treating development as an exclusively economic issue has grave consequences for national development. For example, Kofi Anyidoho (1992) discusses the tendency to highlight the economic dimension as the panacea to economic and national development in an article entitled "Language and Development Strategy in Pan-African Literary Experience." Focusing on language, he argues that it is both a " . . . creative force and a fundamental tool of civilisation and development." He suggests that for Africa to overcome her multiple problems and challenges, she must seriously address the language issue and its function in the national development process. He emphatically states:

> In Africa, planners of development strategy have focused almost exclusively on social, political, and economic issues, and in the last decade, the accent has shifted to concerns about imported science and technology. Culture and all other issues normally assigned to ministries of culture are either ignored or treated with cynical indulgence and indifferent patronage.
>
> (Anyidoho in RAL 1992:45-6)

Whether admitted or neglected by development engineers, the cultural component in the development process contributes significantly to the nature and pace of social transformation. Cultural specialists and politicians often engage in conflicts regarding the best methods of managing national affairs. As mentioned earlier, the cultural practitioner, whose role in African society pre-dates by far the arrival of modern technocrats, traditionally acted as the peoples' watchdog concerning social management. Therefore, the writers in "Conversations with African Writers" ground the political, economic, and social themes in their works against the underlying cultural conditions and contexts existing in their societies. Their conversations reflect the changing times in which they live, and their accounts of how they started on their artistic undertakings and creative writing are indicative of the changing role and function of the singer of tales in a modern setting. However, it would appear that the basic tensions between the prophetic voice and the political will continue to be a contested area.

These writers state that one of the primary reasons motivating them to engage in their craft is to communicate with their audiences. They feel that they have vital information that they want to communicate to those they consider intimate. Most of the writers in the "Conversations with African Writers" consider themselves as the harbingers of information that is crucial to the well being and survival of their societies. The traditional singers of tales performed a similar function in their societies. In many traditional societies, for example among the Zulu peoples, the *Imbongi* or the bard was the "Keeper of the

Sacred Word."[16] He or she was trained in order to be of service to the broader public instead of celebrating his or her individual intellect. There was no separation between the private and public interest, although society recognised the special characteristics such individuals embodied. In spite of the fact that some of these artists were eventually incorporated into the ruling elite, they were careful enough to articulate those things that society cherished. In "Conversations with African Writers," the artists address those issues, concerns, challenges and aspirations they consider to be endearing and enduring to their communities. Traditionally, politicians (kings) patronised artists (prophets) by supplying their material needs. This patronage enabled the creative and performing artists to pursue their artistry without undue economic stress. The politician assumed the role of the patron of the arts as a strategy to ensure his political survival. Mazisi Kunene, in an incisive article entitled "Problems in African Literature," says:

> The true 'poets' represent the essence of popular authority. By the use of words, they can depose a ruler. The "Keepers of the Sacred Word" (*Djeli, griot, mbongi*, etc.) thus embody the democratic institutions that guarantee the independent authority of the people.
>
> (Kunene in RAL 1992: 34-35)

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[16] Note that the *Imbongi* is considered to carry the Sacred Word from the Creator. This concept is the same one held by ancient Israel whereby secular authority was considered to issue from and act on behalf of Divine Authority.

Stephen Arnold (1996) in "A Peopled Persona: Autobiography, Postmodernism and the Poetry of Niyi Osundare" shows that individual or personal rights and responsibilities were always in the service of communal well being. Artists played a vital role in ensuring that individuals did not consider themselves superior to the society that nurtured them.[17]

The work of these accomplished traditional artists at times symbolised some of the foundational institutions in their societies. Some of these artists had a large following with numerous apprentices and novices who were in training. Kunene continues:

> "Keepers of the Sacred Word" train for many years; often they have large numbers of followers and elaborate schools for novices. Such schools are administered by celebrated masters of literature or families that are traditionally associated with them. Novices in these schools are not only trained in the skills of oratory and in the rituals that are connected with literary and other ceremonial performances, but also in the philosophies of their society.
>
> (Kunene in RAL 1992:39)

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[17] "In our area there was an Oba who was very tyrannical. People didn't want to visit violence on him because they had built the palace he lived in and they wouldn't set it on fire. Political action took an artistic form. A song was composed... I still remember my father singing it. It was sung around the palace of the king just for him to hear. It was a parable of course. He heard it and still refused to leave. People started singing it every day... what happened was like the French Revolution. The only difference was, the height of our king was not reduced by his head. There was no guillotine. The song was a metaphorical guillotine. So I grew up in that kind of climate - people questioning, challenging - communal life, the life of the individual flowing into the community, and vice versa. If anybody committed an infringement against the social ideal, the judgement was immediate. It wasn't violent, but it had its own violence. Satire was very potent." Niyi Osundare in Stephen Arnold, "A Peopled Persona: Autobiography, Post-modernism and the Poetry of Niyi Osundare" pp. 151-2 in Janos Riesz and Ulla Schild (Ed.) *Autobiographical Genres in Africa, 143-165.* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1996.

Kunene argues that the "Keepers of the Sacred Word" oftentimes align themselves with the power and control structures in operation in their societies. Mythologising of literature takes place as a means of validating the existing power relationships between the elite and the ruled. African writers interviewed in the "Conversations with African Writers" series of programmes repeatedly speak to the disparities they perceive in the relationship between poets (prophets) and politicians (kings). Tension between these two centres of power sometimes has profound negative repercussions on the artist, especially when he or she assumes the role of a poet/king in society. Akiwumi Isola (1992) gives numerous modern day examples of artists suffering at the hands of politicians especially whenever they criticise the shortcomings of politicians. It would then appear that the issue of the distribution of power between the politician and the artist is an age old problem. In fact it represents the question of voice and agency. Who has the right of address? The basic issue revolves around the relationships in functional roles different members play in society. Therefore when the writers comment about infringements on the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of social life by the African political establishment, they are in effect addressing the lack of a mechanism which would ensure that communal or peoples' rights are upheld over and above individualistic tendencies.

Kunene also discusses the relationships between beginner artists and the more accomplished masters. Traditionally, younger artists were nurtured in an enabling environment because society recognised the aesthetic and philosophical contributions these artists made to the common good. In a modern day counter-situation, writers in the Lee Nichols interviews discuss the lack of literary and creative writing associations in their countries and the implications such lack has on creative writing processes. Modern day literary or creative writing associations seem to correspond to the large schools Kunene documents to have existed in traditional Zulu society. These indigenous institutions served the same purpose as present day associations with the only exception being that social conditions and relationships have changed at a rapid pace. Traditional training schools appear to have been more thorough in preparing their graduates than literary associations in the 1950s and 1970s did. Literary practice on the African continent suggests that African writers and cultural practitioners have not critically examined the implications of the fundamental cultural and aesthetic changes that are occurring in Africa against the practices and strategies that obtained in the traditional communities. African writers have appropriated foreign genres and media of expression without any serious attempts at indigenising the imported forms. This appropriation has not accounted for the assimilation of the underlying philosophical foundations embodied in the foreign cultures. African writers using foreign cultural forms inevitably imported with them foreign cultural practices that have influenced the content and style of their creative productions. The new cultural artefacts remain distinctly alien to the majority of African peoples who have continued to participate in their traditional cultural and creative practices. This point is amply exemplified by the contentious language question in African literature.

Many of the writers in the VOA series of literary programmes writing in indigenous languages said they experience tremendous frustration whenever they present their works for publication and marketing. It would appear that modernity has made it impossible for contemporary African writers to perform their duties in the same manner in which traditional bards did. They have sought new forms and means of conveying traditional idioms and metaphors spoken in foreign tongues and alien idioms spoken in local languages to indigenous communities. It is almost inevitable that these artists feel alienated from the very people with whom they intend to have a conversation. Our discussion of the notion of audience in a previous chapter indicates that perceptions of audience remain largely problematic to the African writer or artist operating in the period between the 1950s and 1970s. When writers in "Conversations with African Writers" were asked to identify their target audiences, their answers show that the African writer has a variegated audience in mind. The following responses illustrate the writers' perceptions of audience: "mass audiences, indigenous/ traditional audiences, school going audiences, the elite, any person capable of reading English, national/ regional and African audiences, and writing for self." The writers considered audience to be a critical factor that determined their success or failure as creative writers. A survey conducted by Phanuel Egejuru (1980) to assess the successes or failures of African writing in the last half a century, revealed " . . . the audience exercises a great influence on the writer because it determines to a large extent, the writer's choice of language, subject matter, genre, quantity and quality of production and distribution." Today, creative writers sing their songs through a variety of forms in the print, audio, and visual media. These channels ought to ensure them wider exposure yet many writers have a limited audience.

While African creative artists have increasingly sought the print medium as a channel of communication with their audiences, an outstanding feature of the new art forms is that they are not anchored in the traditions, philosophy and practices of the indigenous populations. In an incisive and informed discussion of this problem, Phanuel Egejuru in Black Writers: White Audience (1978) demonstrates that the writers' dilemma is a function of their Western education and appropriation of alien languages and art forms. African writers have realised that the print medium has a very limited audience because a large percentage of the African population is pre-literate. As a result, most of the local people rarely participate in the elitist cultural productions emerging from the modern African writer. One method of solving this problem is to use more appropriate modes of delivery. Perhaps it is against this background that Chinua Achebe recognises and stresses the important role modern media could play in encouraging traditional society to participate in the creation and consumption of modern creative productions:

> Although the novel is the most popular genre in African literature, the novelists feel that it does not respond to the needs of the African people, who, for the most part, remain oral in their tradition. The writers would prefer other media such as film or live drama as vehicles of communication with the masses.
>
> (Chinua Achebe in Egejuru 1980:97)

The writers' sense of alienation would not be so profound were the artists to undergo training and immerse themselves in the traditional modes of cultural production and expression. Sembene Ousmane in conversation with Egejuru about the link between the modern writer and traditional African literature acknowledges the changing roles creative artists play and the new forms that convey the artistic artefacts to their audiences. When asked to identify the linchpin, he says:

> The storytellers. These people can, in their manner of talking say things that teach me. I believe the modern artist takes the place in traditional literature of storytellers who existed in all the countries of the world. With cinema, radio, and television, there are almost no more storytellers.
>
> (Sembene Ousmane in Egejuru 1980:74)

Sembene's comments indicate that modern mass media resources have led to the disappearance of the personalised delivery mode of cultural communication associated with the traditional storyteller. Tremendous changes at all levels of society have necessitated a shift in the genres African writers have adopted in their vocation and the respective modes of delivery. Some critics have observed that the most outstanding feature, apart from the content, of African writing is the multiple genres African writers continue to use. It would appear that these shifts are an indication of the prowess of these writers in adapting to their audiences' changing needs. Alternatively, the shifts in genre and style are indications of the writers' attempts to emulate the traditional artist whose craft embodied the audio, visual and the performance modes of presentation. After experimenting with a variety of genres and forms of delivery, most writers in these interviews seem to prefer dramatic and theatrical presentations to the written genres.

They choose these two forms because of two reasons. First, the larger portion of their audiences can not read in any known language including their first languages. Second, many publishers are hesitant to publish works that appear to have a purely local appeal. I think there is a third reason for society's preference for the more dramatic presentation. Creative production in traditional society was and continues to be an amalgamation of the audio and visual media. The traditional singer of tales not only uttered words, but also enacted them before audiences who most often already knew the narrative and participated in its narration. Creativity was to a large extent couched in the manner in which the narrative was rendered by the artist. Traditional society has encoded in its cultural memory and practices the forms and strategies of theatrical performances that are in harmony with the traditions of the society.

In "Conversations with African Writers," Lee Nichols sought to establish the motivating factors behind the writers' decision to adopt the written mode of creative production in spite of the writers' knowledge that their societies were basically oral in nature. Many writers attributed the beginning of their creative writing to various causes. For some, it was the interest and encouragement they received from their teachers, while others cited oral storytelling in the family or the motivation they received through the mass media. The latter consisted of literary magazines, and both the local and international press and radio broadcasting. Steve Chimombo, Kalu Uka, Ola Rotimi, Kole Omotoso, Ali El Mak among others cited the mass media as playing an instrumental role in their formative years as writers. In these conversations, the writers do not single out any one motivating factor as the most crucial element in their decision to begin their creative productions. I will describe and examine some of the factors identified by the writers. Since comments on this issue arise randomly in the interviews, there is no particular order of priority in the sequence of my presentation.

Reading Home Environment

A reading culture in the home environment had a profound effect on some of these writers. Ali El Mak's father was a literary person who had studied almost all the classical Arabic books that included the Koran and Hadith. El Mak's home was like a miniature library in which he invested a lot of time. He began reading these texts at a very early age. His Muslim faith required him to become fluent in both spoken and written Arabic. His exposure to fine language and literature motivated him to consider writing. He began writing single act plays at the age of twelve years old while attending intermediate school. By the time he was doing his secondary education, he had become a regular contributor of essays, poetry and short stories that were pasted on the school walls. These contributions were essentially critical of British colonialism and exploitation of the Sudanese peoples. He graduated from this form of writing and began sending articles to a magazine called the Sahara and also to newspapers and magazines in Egypt and Lebanon.

From South Africa, Bessie Head acknowledges the important role that reading and being read to play in igniting the sense of wonder in a young mind:

> I feel that the love of books is a kind of inborn thing, you know, when you have sort of got a fascination for having stories told to you and read to you. It's something that comes from within. So that even if I didn't have parents to do anything for me, I did a lot of reading on my own because I loved that particular world. You open up a book and you learn about something that's much more exciting than your everyday grind, a world of magic beyond your own. And I feel that the beginnings of writing really start whereby you know that when you open a book there's a magical world there.
>
> (Head, Serowe, September 25, 1976)

Bessie Head's comments reveal the close links between the spoken and written words. Listening to stories read out loud enhances the reading and writing skills in the listener. The uttered word has the power to create through symbolic means a world that is unique. Mazisi Kunene commenting on the power of words in an African context says:

> Within the African context, words are not to be used merely as labels, for they also serve as active agents in a reality where there is no disjunction between the spiritual and the physical, between life and death. From this point of view of the African observer, words and their meanings bring phenomena into being. The observer who defines is also being defined; in other words, the naming of things is an act of creating a world.
>
> (Kunene in RAL 1992:37)

Kole Omotoso speaks to the value of exposing children to both written and oral literature during the early critical formative years. His uncle wrote and published extensively in the Yoruba language. Having access to his uncle's writing kindled young Omotoso's interest in writing. During his schooling, he was able to read extensively in a variety of languages. He says:

> I read quite a lot both in Yoruba and in English and later in Arabic and French. So that I felt I would like to write something like this and possibly give the same kind of joy which these writings had given me to others. I remember spending my holidays from primary school trying to write something for some of my friends around to read. Most of it had to do with traditional stories, stories I had heard in the evenings at storytelling sessions from that I went on to read again, Yoruba novels, Yoruba poems and then English stories. And it is at this point I think that I started writing stories with kind of every day occurrences rather than do folklore.
>
> (Kole Omotoso, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

His exposure to four languages and the literatures expressed in them played a pivotal role in his becoming a writer. Access to the worlds created through language sent young Omotoso on joyous imaginative journeys. It is evident that his early writing experiments consisted of emulating the forms and styles in the literatures he had read. Omotoso's roots in his Yoruba language and oral tradition gave him enough content, practice and confidence with which to begin creative writing. These qualities were consolidated by his exposure to English, Arabic and French languages and literatures. It would appear that definite links exist between reading and listening to a piece of text read out loud and the development of the desire to write. The sense of wonder that literature engenders seems to awaken a creative impulse in the reader or listener. Literature encourages the integration of the listening, reading, speaking and writing skills in those who partake of it.

Oral storytelling sessions

There seems to be very little difference between written and oral literature with regard to their effects on the audience whenever both are delivered orally. It then should not surprise the reader when the writers cited listening to oral literature as part of their initiation into the world of wonder created through a tapestry of words. Some of the writers speak almost exclusively about the value of listening to orally told stories in a traditional environment that had very little intrusion from the printed word. Oral literature continues to be an integral part of the aesthetic appreciation in both literate and non-literate communities in Africa. Narrating and performing folktales has a strong impressionistic effect that surpasses that of reading out loud to a child because the narrative is enacted through performance. R. D. Molefe of Botswana says, " . . . When I was young, I was greatly interested in hearing the poems. My father's father was a man who always praised the chief. So possibly it might be that I inherited this interest in poetry" (Molefe, Gaborone, September 26, 1976).

The renowned Somali folklorist, playwright, novelist and poet, the late Musa Galaal, says his purposes and intentions in writing aim at educating the young generation in Somalia and Africa about their cultural roots and heritage. His contact with oral literature began while in Aden where he became an apprentice poet. He says,

> I was lucky enough to meet some of the greatest Somali poets in Aden and my interest and ability to compose poetry increased. From those days I was in this field of Somali oral literature. Whenever I heard an interesting poem, I jotted it down and that went on until I went to London. From that time I started to compose some dramas and some interesting poems. These were my first fundamental start on becoming a poet myself.
>
> (Musa Galaal, Mogadishu, July 27, 1978)

Galaal's account is indicative of the productive links between listening and writing. He attended the University of London and Cambridge University where he studied English language and literature.

He also took a course in broadcasting and journalism with the British Broadcasting Corporation. His early immersion in the traditions of his people and his exposure to foreign literature seem to have enriched his creative repertoire. Participating in Somali oral literature, reading texts and radio broadcasting enabled him to be sensitive to the particular requirements made by and advantages accruing from the audio, visual and print media. On his return to Somaliland he assumed leadership of the then Radio Somalia under British rule. This gave him an opportunity to broadcast some of his own writing on Radio Somalia. His drama entitled A Division of Meat by the Wild Animals was popular with the public. He says:

> When I finished it people loved it so much that I was asked to put it on the radio. And it was played in the Radio Hargeisa and there were telegrams and requests all over the country for repetition. But the British government became very suspicious when they saw all those telegrams - and said, "No, no more."
>
> (Musa Galaal, Mogadishu, July 27, 1978)

A Division of Meat by the Wild Animals is a fable in which the animals set out to equitably portion out camel meat. The only animal who comes out unharmed is the fox who in effect hands over all the meat to the lion, the chief of the animals. This poetic drama appealed to the Somali public because it addresses the theme of oppression and exploitation subject peoples suffer under unjust leadership. Another plausible reason could be that it utilises the animal fable format popular in oral literature. The British government's intervention attests to their concern about the awesome power that radio has in not only disseminating literature but also causing a genuine awakening of a people's consciousness. Galaal's work bridges the gap between the world of oracy and literacy through the audio medium of radio.[18]

From Nigeria, Ola Rotimi gives an amazing account of how he became involved with drama and theatrical productions. His father involved the family in the drama productions he directed. Rotimi began his acting life in 1942 at the tender age of four. By the time he was in primary school, his poetry was already being read on children's programmes over the then Nigerian Broadcasting Service. In secondary school, he wrote short drama skits and short stories that were also broadcast over the Nigerian national radio. On his return from studies in the United States, he spent the next two years travelling in rural Nigeria listening to, observing and recording oral tradition materials. He acknowledges the critical influence this experience has had on his writing craft when he says:

> I found these research efforts very, very rewarding in my later writing style in that much of our oral tradition now finds way into my play body, aspects of mythology and philosophy ingress into my style and substance of creativity. This is perhaps one

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[18] Musa Gallal informed Lee Nichols that at the time of the interview, he had collected over five hundred reels of material that required cataloguing.

> way of creating a distinctiveness, an Africanness in the writing of a play that is supposed to be African.
>
> (Ola Rotimi, Ile-Ife, July, 1974)

Aspects of oral tradition play a significant role in The Gods Are Not to Blame, Kurumi, and Oba Nwo Obwarisi, among others. His work has profited immensely from the vibrant cultural life at Ile-Ife. Rotimi's comments concur with those of Mazisi Kunene on the question of literature embodying the foundational myths and philosophy of society. Assimilation of traditional cultural practices into Rotimi's art is an exception to Mazisi Kunene's generalisation in which Kunene stresses that most African writers fail to make connection with their African audiences because their art is not rooted and established in their peoples' traditions and philosophy.

Meja Mwangi of Kenya similarly narrates about how his imagination was enthralled by the mystical world of oral literature. At an early age he attended story telling sessions which were held in his home or the surrounding homesteads. He combined listening to oral narratives with reading children's story books which his mother brought home:

> I had this advantage that since my mother was working for white people, she could get these kids' books from their children. I used to read these and I got to liking these stories. And then from there I started reading novels, small novels, novelettes. I continued with this and finally I thought I would write a story like the stories I read.
>
> (Meja Mwangi, Nairobi, August 25, 1974)

The urge to write came upon him at the age of seventeen. Both Cyprian Ekwensi and Meja Mwangi began their literary activity by writing short stories that they had to rework and consolidate into People of the City and Kill Me Quick respectively.

Meja Mwangi's compatriot Grace Ogot was also nurtured on oral storytelling among her Luo community. She earned some unpopularity in her home because of her obsession with listening to oral narratives instead of helping with domestic chores. During her youth, she envisioned writers as highly trained and specialised literary types who had nothing in common with ordinary people. On completing her secondary education, she enrolled to train as a nurse. It was not until her courtship with her spouse-to-be that she became aware of her artistic prowess. She recounts:

> I wrote him a letter. After several letters, he one day wrote back and said, "Do you know, Grace, you can write poetry. Because your letters are so romantic." Of course, I thought, well, maybe a man is in love and that was all. I wrote back and said, "Listen brother, I can't understand poetry, I don't read them so I'll never write one." He was so persistent about it that eventually he said, "If you can't write poetry why not try short stories?" And I tried one and it worked. I gave it to him, he read it and liked it. And that's when I wrote "The Rain Came."
>
> (Grace Ogot, Nairobi, August 28, 1974)

"The Rain Came" was published in the West African magazine Black Orpheus, started and edited by Ulli Beier. Soon after, more requests for short stories came from magazines in Kenya and the British

Broadcasting Corporation. The extent of Ogot's creative abilities is demonstrated by the fact that she wrote a women's column in the East African Standard. In addition, she had a weekly radio programme on The Voice of Kenya conducted in the Dholuo language entitled, *Family Magazine*. Once again, Ogot exemplifies a writer who finds an outlet for her creative works in more than one medium.

Literary Criticism

In addressing the area of literary criticism as another dimension of a viable literary culture, these writers uniformly bewail a flaw in its practice. This form of scholarship and literary creativity is relatively new to African writing in general. Literary criticism in Africa has been associated with European scholars and the universities. This attitude has created the impression that commentary on and evaluation of African literature is an elitist activity. For a long time, European critics have dominated the evaluation of African literature inevitably imposing evaluative tools from their own culture on African writing. Commenting on the performance of African and European critics, Egejuru (1980) says

> The Western critic . . . fails largely because he wants African literature to fit perfectly into the conventional mold of Western literature. He is too far removed from the cultural symbols that permeate the works, and more often than not, he is quite ignorant of the socio-historical dynamics that gave birth to African literature. . . . The aspiring African critic fails because his only frame of reference is the Western critical standard that he has learned from his Western teachers. In spite of the edge

> that he seems to have over his Western counterpart in terms of cultural and historical background, he still does not go beyond critiquing African literature on the basis of Western literary standards or just interpreting African cultural symbols to non-African readers.
>
> (Egejuru 1980:8)

The non-utilisation of indigenous evaluative and aesthetic strategies and criteria has caused a sense of frustration among both readers and writers. The tension is caused by the clash between two different aesthetic criteria applied in evaluating African writing as opposed to African creative practices. Egejuru's analysis confirms the theoretical premise made by Schutz (1962/67); Berger and Luckmann (1966), and Goffmann (1974) regarding the centrality of a frame of reference in the construction of social reality through symbolic means discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation. Egejuru observes that the African writers were supposed to spearhead their peoples' cultural renaissance and political freedom yet "African literature, perhaps more than any other segment of Africa's 'progress,' remains dependent on the ex-masters' literary tradition, taste, and approval" (Egejuru, 1980:9). The critics are products of the Western educational systems which are alien socialising agencies. The African critic's situation is evident to any one involved with African artistic productions. Akiwumi Isola quotes a village elder who laments the damage Western socialisation has caused in society, "We spend all our money sending them to school, but when they become capable, they stop talking to us. Isn't that a big loss?" (Akiwumi Isola (1992:17)

Writers who recognise the communicative gap between themselves and the African audiences they intend to reach have to contend with obstacles hindering the bridging of the gap. In their discussion of problems and challenges facing African writers in the period between the 1950s and 1970s,[19] most of the writers singled out the inadequate support and hostile environment the publishing industry extends to their creative efforts. This phenomenon occurs whenever these creative artists perform in their indigenous languages. Resistance by these foreign owned and controlled publishing houses occurs because they are a conduit through which concepts and traditions of the "mother" country find symbolic expression. It could also be argued that the Academy and those in charge of these transnational establishments consider it a form of betrayal by Western-educated writers, whom they consider to be polluting the Western literary and cultural oases at which they were allowed to quench their thirst whenever they write in indigenous languages. Mazisi Kunene suggests that this negative attitude is a function of the economic structure, Western philosophical foundations and power relations which categorise literary productions into "high" and "low" variants in society:

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[19] See Chapter Four of this dissertation for a detailed account of the writers' perceptions.

> For this reason, writers who write in African languages are marginalised and have difficulty publishing their works. Within this context, literature is evaluated not according to its quality but in proportion to its proximity to the style and the dominant concerns of the ex-colonial country, which in turn promotes "African" literature written in its language by offering prizes, invitations, and an assortment of other rewards.
>
> (Kunene in RAL 1992:39)

Mazisi identifies a crucial characteristic of literary practice and propagation to be found in any society. The literary tradition originates from and addresses those issues and concerns that are pertinent to its society. Literary criticism is a legitimate practice literary purveyors and scholars undertake because it draws from and informs their cultural heritage. One would expect a healthy creative writing environment to be one which derives strength from vibrant scholastic criticism and other cultural practices. Criticism interrogates both the form and content of the creative artistic productions in the consuming culture. Both Egejuru and Mazisi question African writers' reliance on foreign cultural institutions to promote African literary productions. The need for the establishment of a supportive literary environment has led African writers to advocate the creation of writers' associations and clubs. They envisage that writers' clubs and associations would lead to a more vibrant literary environment resulting in more and better literary productions. (The Mbari Club in Nigeria in the 1950s performed this function with spectacular results. This aspect is discussed at length below.)

The dearth of authentic African literature critics seems to have begun changing in the 1970s when some African scholars ventured more consciously into literary criticism which was sensitive to the African context. Even with this evolving situation, modern African literature has not had a supportive critical tradition and environment. Some of the writers interviewed in "Conversations with African Writers" are wary of the harsh and often negative criticism of their artistic works. Yulisa Maddy of Sierra Leone feels that there is a lack of genuine critics in his country. Efua Sutherland commenting on this problem in her native Ghana says there is

> need for real criticism. By real I mean realistic criticism. We don't need anybody's hackneyed criteria for criticising the work we are trying to develop. The ordinary criteria for literary criticism that somebody lifts out of a book or from another culture won't do. I find a real cross-purpose situation between the articulate literate critic and the people.
>
> (Efua Sutherland, Accra, July 21, 1974)

Chris Wanjala of Kenya was one of the emerging African literary critics interviewed by Nichols for this series of programmes. He has a literary column in the local newspapers through which he is encouraging ordinary newspaper readers to participate in some form of literary criticism. Discussions in his literary columns are structured to ensure that they do not become too intellectual and elitist in nature. Wanjala views the critic as a person who

> . . . is a kind of value maker. To some extent, he helps to encourage some kind of standards of judgement. Not so much the aesthetic arguing about the structure of the works, the format and so on but to encourage some kind of moral health in society.
>
> (Chris Wanjala, Nairobi, August 23, 1974)

He says the critic has a tendency to intellectualise and experiment with ideas often times writing for fellow scholars and intellectuals. However, his form of criticism targets the general public that has access to Sunday newspapers.

Publishing Firms, Literary Magazines, and Creative Writing

A great number of writers in the Lee Nichols series of programmes emphasised the importance of writers' associations, literary journals and magazines as outlets that encouraged peer criticism and discussion of each other's works in a non-condemnatory environment. Some of the writers went further to suggest that the lack of writers' clubs or societies when they began writing had a very negative effect on their writing. They consider writers' groups to be necessary in nurturing both the talents and development of skills in a community of artists. Such clubs would act as cells in which budding artists would benefit from the tutelage of their more experienced colleagues. They suggested that advice from their colleagues would be instrumental in helping them to get their work published.

Writers need their work to be exposed to a wider circle or readers than just that of their peers. Literary and cultural journals and magazines have been one of the most effective media through which such exposure is achieved. African creative writing benefited tremendously from the services of localised and continental critical journals. Black Orpheus and Transition were instrumental in nurturing artistic talent on the African continent. Peter Benson's article entitled "'Border Operators': Black Orpheus and the Genesis of Modern African Literature" is an informative historical description of the purposes and the achievements of Black Orpheus, Nigeria's and indeed Africa's pioneering cultural journal founded in 1957 by Ulli Beier. Benson cites Gerald Moore's comments appearing in the Ghanaian literary journal Okyeame (10 November, 1961:66) regarding the purposes of budding literary magazines on the continent at the time:

> The function of periodicals in nurturing the new literatures of African and the Caribbean cannot be overstated. They represent necessary documentary proof of fashion and growth. Their function is not so much to preserve as to link. Often they stand at the very beginning of the development of local literature, setting up standards and providing a literary market for buyer and seller.
>
> (cited in RAL 1983:432)

Benson notes Black Orpheus played an instrumental role in the art and development of the early African writers and scholars many of whom contributed articles and sat on the editorial board of Black Orpheus. Some of the distinguished African writers involved with Black Orpheus included Abiola Irele, Wole Soyinka, Dennis Brutus, Alex La Guma, J. P. Clark among others. This journal promoted African and diasporic writing, music, painting and sculpture in Anglophone and Francophone Africa. The editors ensured that the materials were transmitted in the original languages or in translation. The inaugural editorial (1st September, 1957:4) stated:

> A journal devoted to contemporary African literature has long been overdue. The young African writer is struggling hard to build up for himself a literary public in Africa. All too often he has to turn to Europe for criticism and encouragement. It is still possible for a Nigerian child to leave a secondary school with a thorough knowledge of English literature, but without even having heard of such great black writers as Leopold Sedar Senghor or Aime Cesaire.
>
> (Benson RAL 1983:435)

Robert Gregory in an article entitled "Literary Development in East Africa: The Asian Contribution, 1955-1975" discounts the myth that the Asian community did not make any literary contribution in East Africa. I find this article useful in its account of the literary magazine Transition founded by Rajat Neogy in November 1961 in Kampala, Uganda. Gregory says of Transition:

> . . . Neogy made his journal a medium of expression for nearly all the avant-garde literati of East Africa. He also attracted outside talent from Europe, the United States, and West and Southern Africa. He started a writer's fellowship to support such visitors as Saul Bellow and Naipaul who would affiliate with the university, hold two or three seminars, and write for his journal. *Transition* became a clearing house, a focal point for artists coming and going. It printed plays, poems, short stories, and literary essays as well as political and economic analyses. Maintaining a very high quality, it prospered with an ultimate paid circulation of 12,000.
>
> (Gregory in RAL 1981:453)

Stephen Arnold's "Preface to a History of Cameroonian Literature in English" (1983) is a well researched historical account of the Cameroonian literary situation from the 1950s to the 1970s. Arnold reports that the prevalent view about Anglophone Cameroonian writing was that they ". . . engaged in literary activity, because in spite of its existence, anglophone Cameroon writing was conscious of itself only in fragments, having been isolated from the mainstream of literature on the continent and even within its own boundaries by Cameroon's unique historical circumstances" (Arnold 1983:498). This quotation serves to demonstrate that whenever writers are isolated from each other, literary creativity suffers. He documents the efforts of important literary figures and the crucial role literary journals played in the development of Cameroonian literary creativity and production. Arnold discusses how literary production was enhanced through magazines, newspapers, annuals and periodicals. Periodicals like Fako, Contact, Issue, Cameroon Yearbook, Cameroon Outlook, The Spark renamed The Mould, The Herald from 1960 to 1973, Sake, Citizen, Le Tam Tam, and Blackout among others played an instrumental role in the process. He lists Abbia, Ozila, Le Cameroun, Le Cameroun Litteraire, and L'Ecriture as the more traditional literary reviews. This article is important in establishing the fact that without these literary journals it would have been difficult to nurture any literary productivity in Cameroon.

African writers interviewed in "Conversations with African Writers" cited similar problems besetting African writing of the period between the 1950s and 1970s. Kona Khasu (Monrovia, July 11, 1975) of Liberia said:

> Well, the problems we have here are many. One very prominent problem that's always been with us is the lack of a sustained kind of journal, local journal, that will disseminate the creations among the writers and among the audience. Then there doesn't seem to be a wide support in any organised fashion from people who ought to do this, to say sponsor festivals, playwrighting festivals or poetry festivals. An institutionalised approach to not creating but assisting the writers to create. So far, only individuals are doing that ... we have the Society of Liberian Authors which is doing very, very well.
>
> (Kona Khasu, Monrovia, July 11, 1975)

These cases illustrate the critical role local, regional and continental literary journals played in nurturing artistic endeavours in Africa between the 1950s and 1970s. It should be pointed out that these were private efforts that did not receive any government funding. By the

1970s most of the pioneering scholastic and cultural journals had gone out of business because of financial, editorial and pragmatic circumstances. Therefore, statements about the non-existence of a conducive literary atmosphere by the writers Lee Nichols interviewed in the 1970s are to be analysed against this brief summary of the influence of journals on artistic development in Africa. The writers' comments only reaffirm the immense importance of literary journals in artistic development.

The situation in Liberia was slightly different in that there was government funding of artistic work. In an article "The Role of the State in the Development of Literature: The Liberian Government and Creative Fiction," John Singler (RAL 1980) documents the negative effects government patronage had on the development of literary and cultural production and communication when the government sought to use these channels as a means of enhancing national unity, integration and loyalty to the state apparatus. In instances like the Liberian case, cultural purveyors are expected to propagate literary and cultural forms that minimise contestation in the play out of power and control relations between the state, society and the artists. The Liberian government promoted works that advocated state policies by prescribing such texts for the literature programme in the school system. Singler suggests that since the government controlled the means to the writers' livelihood and broader circulation of their works most of them exercised self-censorship.[20] In addition, government control was expressed through its funding and appointment of the senior officials of Kaafa, the journal of the Society of Liberian Authors. This journal was the main literary channel through which writers promoted their creative works. B. T. Moore was confident that Kaafa, the journal of the Society of Liberian Authors, had a tremendous effect on the Liberian creative writing scene not only through its encouragement of writers but also as a publishing outlet in the country (Monrovia, July 12, 1975).

It would then appear that although there was provision of a literary journal envisaged to encourage creativity, the government's power and control functions militate against the effectiveness of the medium. Singler seems to suggest that writers are likely to lose control over what they write whenever the state apparatus endorses and appropriates cultural forms that enhance the idea of nationhood and the prevailing ideology. Mlama (1995) making specific reference to the Tanzanian situation shows that such an appropriation of the writers' voice may lead to a monopolising control of cultural expression and communication. She suggests that artists are dis-empowered by state hegemonic appropriation of cultural forms and communication. This tendency leads to neutralising artistic expression and production. She categorically states:

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[20] **A detailed account of the gatekeeping function is presented in Chapter Two of this dissertation.**

> whereas African governments have claimed that they are building national cultural identities through the promotion of oral art, they have in fact succeeded in domesticating and disempowering oral artists to the political advantage of the ruling classes.
>
> (Peninah Mlama in Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature, 1995:25)

The Liberian and Tanzanian cases are examples of what could go wrong when governments take over the means of propagating cultural productions and creativity. However, no individual or organ of state can hijack and contain artistic expression and communication. Artists devise newer forms of expression that subvert the prevailing power relations or find accommodative spaces within the body politic.

Nigerian Kole Omotoso is one writer who recognised that the lack of literary outlet in the 1970s was a critical need that had to be addressed by African writers and scholars. In response to satisfying the need for a literary journal, he has helped establish a magazine called New Horn at the University of Ibadan where he has a teaching position. He is also the editor of the literary section of Afriscope. The former publishes poetry, prose and literary articles while the latter is a monthly news magazine published in Lagos. These new outlets seem to be generating a positive effect in Nigerian literary circles. Kole Omotoso's comment is self-explanatory:

> The aim has been to redirect the future of African literature. I have a bulky file of stuff sent from different parts of the place, from even secondary school kids who write short, short stories of about one hundred words. And from people who complain that nobody seems to be interested in publishing them because they are not graduates of universities.
>
> (Kole Omotoso, Ibadan, July 31, 1974)

Influence from other Writers

"Conversations with African Writers" reveals that some established African and European writers had a significant influence on the creative skills of these budding African authors Lee Nichols interviewed in the 1970s. Phola Dube from Swaziland acknowledges that John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath and The Pearl captured his sense of wonder by their beautiful descriptions. Dube is also a musician who writes jazz music. He has fused his writing and music to produce the play Musicals. Nigerian Ola Rotimi also expressed his indebtedness to the European playwrights whose works he studied while pursuing a graduate degree in theatre in the United States of America. On his return to Nigeria, he deliberately undertook to diminish their influence on him by immersing himself in the oral traditions of his people. His intention was self discovery and to be

> able to find a uniqueness to one's creative style that would distinguish one's expressiveness - from that of others, that particular playwright you might have come across in your educational process - in other words, how could you who having spent five years in the United States write and not have a tinge of Eugene O'Neill or Tennessee Williams coming up in your style.
>
> (Ola Rotimi, Ile-Ife, July, 1974)

Influence by foreign and regional writers could be likened to cross-fertilisation while local and national influence would be akin to self-fertilisation. Kona Khasu from Liberia is encouraged by the new development in which emerging African writers model narrative agents in their creative writing along identical or similar characters in the works of the more established African writers. This is an interesting phenomenon in which characters move from one novel to another in the works of different writers. Khasu states

> it's a very good development. Because in the past nobody looked at any other African writer to say I was influenced by him. He wants to be influenced by either Faulkner or Milton or this person or that person - the interchange between African writers, the conferences, and this festival and that thing. All these are bound to yield a closer communication among the writers and it will be easier then to get ideas across the continent.
>
> (Kona Khasu, Monrovia, July 11, 1975)

The writers' comments indicate that the intra and inter cultural exchange and movement of narrative agents signalled an increasing sophistication in the creative processes in African writing of this era. It would appear that the writers were moving toward consolidation and appropriation of what might have been the beginning of a major modern continental narrative. This is what Kayper-Mensah termed " . . . a spiritual and intellectual environment in which we can grow" (Accra, July 20, 1974). Commenting on the same issue, Mbise of Tanzania (Toronto, September, 1974) recalled that the Sudanese writer Taban lo Liyong was at the forefront of a new form of creative writing in East Africa. It involved a synthesis of diverse portions of literary trends evolving into a dynamic artistic mosaic. It is tempting to view this new trend as the beginning of a conscious writing of a Pan-African narrative which focused on issues and challenges that confronted the continent as it forged beyond merely reacting to internal and external stereotypical descriptions of the African personality and cultural aesthetics. These writers were careful to warn against any unrealistic navel gazing. Their focus was on the prevailing material and social conditions as the informing essence to their writing.

Influence of Radio Broadcasting

"Conversations with African Writers" shows that despite the fact that these writers worked with different media, it seems there were links among their chosen channels of expression. Once an article appeared in a newspaper or journal, the writers' work would sooner or later be carried on both the local and international broadcasting networks. In addition, some of these writers were contributors to newspapers and literary journals in their countries. Others among them acknowledge that working with radio broadcasters as well as having their literary productions broadcast over national and international radio stations helped launch their writing careers. One such writer is Kalu Uka who worked as a production assistant in the Talks Department with Radio Nigeria on graduating from Ibadan University in 1962. While pursuing his Masters degree in English literature, he had the opportunity to work with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He says,

> For the radio experience and the fact that going to Canada opened for me a whole new field of how language actually behaved in society. It then got me even more excited because I then . . . felt like throwing away all the things I had written for the language seemed stilted, book oriented, too grammatical. I felt challenged again, I felt excited again in Canada and I began writing poems that had a lot of the colloquial nuances . . . a lot more flow, a lot more music, a lot more poeticness . . . because I had discovered anew what it was like to learn a language through the textbook and learn about it when it works in society.
>
> (Kalu Uka, Nsukka, August 4, 1974)

He returned to Nigeria late 1965 and wrote a lot of poetry both prior to and during the Nigerian civil war. These poems, collected in an anthology called Dead and Buried, capture the extreme forms of violence and the subsequent suffering they caused on the human spirit. It did not take him long to realise that poetry had a very limited audience. He shifted to the novel genre writing about the Nigerian civil war. This exercise resulted in A Consummation of Fire written in 1971 and published in 1972. Soon after the novel, he changed to playwrighting. His second play Happy Survival was written as a radio play.

Liberian Bai Tamiah Moore has had a long and distinguished career as a writer of poetry, folk tales, novels and short stories. A high school teacher encouraged him to seriously consider writing. His writing draws from his personal journal in which he records interesting materials from his extensive experiences and travels both in Liberia and the United States of America. He has read some of his poetry on both the Voice of America and Radio Liberia. In addition, his play Murder in the Cassava Patch was serialised in The Liberian Star. This exemplifies the close links between the various media that writers could access in their efforts to communicate with their multiple audiences. In this case the variegated audience would consist of the elite who would access the print media, and the pre-literate oral segment of society who would utilise radio and other visual forms of media.

During the mid-nineteen-sixties most African and European universities did not offer any African and Third World literature courses.

Yulisa Maddy of Sierra Leone found this lack a very alienating experience to the extent that his disaffection with formal schooling led him to explore the possibilities of drama and theatre. A classmate of his did not think him capable of writing a play. Out of this challenge, he wrote his first play Yonkon which he sold to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for twenty-five pounds. This early encounter with theatre introduced him to the world of radio broadcasting. Over the years, he has produced plays by African writers for Danish radio as well as having some of his plays broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Kayper-Mensah of Ghana attests to the immense influence radio had on creative writing in the country. He recalls:

> It was when I came back to Ghana in fifty that what I had written became interesting. There was Henry Swansea of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation who was very keen on young writers in Ghana. He started a programme called *The Singing Net* and this weekly programme covered all sorts of writing - poetry, plays, short stories and so on. I managed to get much of what I had written on to him and he made use of a lot of it. And then there was the British Council competitions, a drama competition which I won and that of course attracted a little attention. Once it was over, we were able to produce a book Voices of Ghana from these experiments and afterwards I felt I should go on and on since then.
>
> (Kayper-Mansah, Accra, July 20, 1974)

This radio broadcasting project involved other Ghanaian writers among whom was Efua Sutherland. She contributed some poems and other types of writing to the programme. The above testimony exemplifies how radio broadcasting was used to ignite a creative spark among young writers in Ghana. Similarly it demonstrates that there are benefits that will accrue from having creative writing competitions popularised through radio broadcasting as long as they are rooted and established in the traditions and culture of the consuming audience. The Ghanaian experimentation resulted in not only motivating writers in Ghana but also in the publication of an anthology called Voices of Ghana.

In Malawi, Dr. Felix Mnthali had been running a programme called "The Writers' Corner" on Radio Malawi through which beginner writers had the opportunity to discuss their work. Dr. Mnthali (Zomba, August 8, 1975) had not written anything significant prior to 1969 when he was asked to launch this programme on the Malawi Broadcasting Company. This compelled him to write a story called "Roses for Miranda." He began by writing short stories and some poetry. His writing has been published in Jolisho: The East African Journal of Society and Literature, and Busara a university of Nairobi student magazine among others. His early writing was shaped by one of the two writers' groups in English and Chichewa established at the University of Malawi. He is of the opinion that Malawian writers ought to be grateful to the Malawi Broadcasting Company for the exposure and support it rendered to them.

Similar comments were made by Onalenna Selolwane (Gaborone, September 26, 1976) and Albert Malikongwa (Gaborone, September 23, 1976) both of Botswana who expressed gratitude to their government for supporting local writers. Through the Ministry of information and Radio Botswana, writers have had their work published in the local press and broadcast over national radio. S. Z. Lukhelele from Swaziland praised his government and the British Broadcasting Corporation for allowing writers to have their work disseminated over Radio Swazi and from Bush House in London respectively.

The situation in Ethiopia was somewhat different with regard to the use of national radio in that the government gave preferential treatment to politicians. Some of the writers interviewed stated that their respective governments censored any writing that was critical of the manner in which politicians conducted national affairs. Any writer who was critical about any aspect of political authority would be denied access to the national radio broadcasting network. This appears to have been the prevalent situation in Ethiopia, South Africa and the surrounding dependent nations of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.[21]

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[21] Some of the Nigerian and Kenyan writers interviewed in "Conversations with African Writers" indicated that there was some form of tolerance by their governments toward expression of dissent. However, the period beginning from late 1970 to the 1990s has

Most African countries have used radio broadcasting not only to encourage literary creativity through radio contests and literary discussions among experienced and emerging writers but also as a forum that nurtures literary criticism. Stephen Arnold in "Orphans of the Commonwealth: An Account of the 1978 Guinness Cameroon Great Writers Contest" documents literary development in Anglophone Cameroon. Arnold's account is a good illustration of how radio broadcasting was utilised by an African country in promoting literary production. He says

> In 1971, Buma Kor became the provincial delegate for the Western Cameroon region of the National Association of Cameroon Poets and Writers (APEC) and toured twenty-one schools that year lecturing on APEC and encouraging young writers. Radio Cameroon (Buea) and the newspapers *Cameroon Outlook* and *Cameroon Times* followed him and assisted him in establishing a popular radio program, "Young Writers Forum," which ran more than one hundred programs; through this program he convened the first writers' conference in anglophone Cameroon.
>
> (Stephen Arnold in RAL 1983:502)

Among other things, Arnold in this article pays tribute to some of the outstanding literary and cultural figures in Cameroon. He demonstrates that various people working in diverse media collaborated to ensure that cultural propagation continued despite difficult local conditions. He

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witnessed some of the harshest censorship of personal freedoms and liberties on the African continent.

narrates how Paul Kode, the director of the Buea radio station was to launch an amazing radio literary competition in Cameroon in 1978 which attracted about 8000 pages or 18 kg of manuscripts in the three categories of short stories, poems, and radio plays. The fact that the winning entries would be broadcast over national radio is partly responsible for the enthusiastic response.[22] Arnold's description establishes the close links that existed among the national writers' association, the press and radio Cameroon in propagating literary and cultural communication and development in Cameroon. Arnold suggests that the concept of "publishing" should be expanded to include other media such as radio. His comments:

> For example, a number of these writers have had their works "publicized" on radio. Since the 1940s the BBC has occasionally featured Cameroonians on Africa Service cultural programs, as has the Voice of America. Radio reaches far more people than print, and writers and aspirant writers are obviously avid listeners to such programs.
>
> (Arnold in RAL 1983:503)

Kenyan writer and literary critic Chris Wanjala runs a weekly radio programme on the Kenyan national radio system stresses the importance of radio dissemination of literary and cultural materials when he says

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[22] This contest was initiated by Paul Kode, Director of the Buea Station of Radio Cameroon and sponsored by Guinness Cameroon breweries. The general public was invited to make submissions beginning August, 1978 and by 1979, the organisers had received entries far surpassing their expectations. The overwhelming response created logistic problems for the organisers who decided to discontinue the radio contest the following year. Contestants in their enthusiasm even submitted non-literary items like paintings for adjudication.

> I have been involved largely with a radio programme on the Voice of Kenya where we have a radio programme called *Books and Bookmen*. I have been reviewing books weekly to interest the public in the newly published stuff and at the same time I have been writing for the local Sunday papers, for example, the Sunday Post and the Sunday Nation, which I think is a very popular medium because on Sundays people are more relaxed and oftentimes when you meet them they say, "You know, I read the review of such a book and I will be interested to get it."
>
> (Chris Wanjala, Nairobi, August 23, 1974)

Some of his literature radio programmes are broadcast in Kiswahili because, "in this way, I actually reach the people in the villages, the teachers in the villages, the people who can afford a radio and even the children in the villages." Through radio diffusion, Chris Wanjala is able to reach a large cross section of Kenyan society. His approach removes the mysticism that has come to be associated with literary criticism in some African countries. A thorough documented account of literary criticism and cultural communication conducted over Kenyan national radio by Chris Wanjala and other animators remains to be undertaken by Kenyans.

Guillaume Oyono-Mbia of Cameroon could be described as personifying the links between radio broadcasting and eventual publication of literary works. At the time of the interview, he was the head of Service for Cultural Action and Diffusion in the Cameroonian Ministry of Information and Culture as well as a translator in the

Ministry of National Education. He narrates how radio broadcasting played a significant role in his attempts to write in English:

> In nineteen sixty-six the BBC had organised a playwrighting contest and I contributed a one-act play written in English. That was my first attempt in that language. The play was called Until Further Notice and was produced by the BBC with an all-African cast. It got published by Methuen and Company Limited in England and I took advantage of the publication and rewrote my first play Three Suitors: One Husband in English and both were published in the same volume.[23]
>
> (Guillaume Oyono-Mbia, Cameroon, July 24, 1974)

Oyono-Mbia's case seems to indicate that once a creative piece has gained wider exposure through radio and other mass media, it is almost inevitable that it will be published in book form.

Testimony by some of the writers interviewed by Lee Nichols cited in this dissertation indicates that the British Broadcasting Corporation played a significant role in African literary development. Because of the fact that these writers repeatedly mention the British Broadcasting Corporation as a key institution in nurturing their writing skills, I will briefly comment on the role this international broadcaster has fulfilled with regard to African writing. The British Broadcasting Corporation African Service has mounted various programmes through which

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[23] Oyono-Mbia wrote Until Further Notice for the 1966/67 African Theatre Service competition while in England and won the first prize with plays by Nigerian Joe Okpaku then in America and Kenyan Leonard Kibera then a student in Nairobi receiving second and third prizes respectively. This event demonstrates the wide reach of the BBC African Service.

Africans and either people of African descent or those intimately involved with African issues and problems have presented their works and views. The BBC has devoted innumerable hours and resources in the promotion of the African novel, short story, poetry, drama and theatre through literary competitions and scheduled programmes beamed to its African and world audiences. Shirely Cordeaux's article entitled "The BBC African Service's Involvement in African Theatre" (Cordeaux in RAL 1970) is an informative historical account of the BBC African Service's promotion of African drama and theatre from 1959 to 1970. Cordeaux documents that between 1962 and 1970, the BBC African Service had produced over 100 original plays by African playwrights. Her comments concerning African Service's productions:

> . . . they made good listening, offered an opportunity to African actors in England to show their paces, and encouraged African writers to express themselves in dramatic terms . . . and in radio dramatic terms . . . by providing a modestly-paid outlet for their work.
>
> (Cordeaux in RAL 1970:148)

She cautions that the BBC African Service did not pose as the patron of African radio drama. She acknowledges the crucial role national radio networks on the African continent have played by extending financial and moral support to African artists operating on the continent. Cordeaux suggests that international radio broadcasters are and will continue to be key partners in furthering African writing. She makes the following important comments about the role the institution plays:

> . . . our transmissions can be heard all over Africa, and this means that the work of, say, a Ugandan writer can be heard in Sierra Leone, and vice versa; we can therefore act as a central clearing house for original dramatic work. Also, many national radio stations in Africa do not have the resources - in money or in personnel - to spare for this kind of cultural effort.
>
> (Cordeaux in RAL 1970:149)

One of the main objectives of the BBC African Theatre Service has been to encourage "new writing talent" among African writers. She lists writers like Alfred Hutchinson, Kuldip Sondhi, Femi Euba, Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mbella Sonne Dipoko, Cameron Duodu, Bloke Modisane, Audrey Kachungwe, James Ngugi and Obi Egbuna to show the variety of talent and quality of works by African authors.[24] Cordeaux's comments regarding the supportive role of the BBC African Service are in tandem with the comments made by some of the writers interviewed by Lee Nichols. She concludes:

> ... in certain ways, then, one could say that "African Theatre" has acted as a radio nursery for African writing talent. It has similarly been a nursery for African actors and actresses ... their voices are well-known to their African audiences, and authors anxious for the success of their play ask for their inclusion in the cast.
>
> (Cordeaux in RAL 1970:149-50)

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[24] A complete list of all the plays by African authors produced between 1962 and 1970 on the BBC appears as an appendix to Cordeaux's article.

Citations from Cordeaux's article are used here to corroborate comments made by some of the writers in the Lee Nichols literary interviews as well as to show that African writers have been assisted by both national and international radio broadcasting networks in nurturing their writing talents and skills. Other international radio broadcasters like Radio France Internationale, Radio Deutsche Welle, Danish Radio, Radio Moscow, and the Canadian International Radio have carried African literary and cultural materials in their scheduled programming. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to render a detailed account of the role of international radio broadcasting in disseminating African cultural communication but to situate their contribution in the development of literary development on the continent. The BBC African Service is singled out because the writers repeatedly acknowledged the support they received from this special institution which has promoted African literary and cultural production more than any other international broadcaster.

During the 1960s and 1970s, some African governments instituted concrete measures to facilitate the development of individual writers. This was accomplished by financing writers' clubs and associations, access to national radio and the establishment of national literary competitions and prizes. At the same time, efforts were made to encourage and nurture the consumption of literature by the school system and the general public respectively. Most of the writers in this series of programmes discussed how participating in literary competitions motivated them to pursue writing. Some of them reminisced about their early writing being broadcast over national radio.

Educational Radio in Kenya - A Brief Survey

Stephen Arnold's article "Orphans of the Commonwealth: An Account of the 1978 Guinness Cameroon Great Writers Contest" and Lee Nichols' programmes entitled "Conversations with African Writers" led me to this research. It is not my intention to make a comprehensive study of radio broadcasting and literary creativity and development in African countries during the decades between 1950 to 1970. However, I will briefly outline the use of radio broadcasting in Kenya as an educational tool tying this usage to the comments made by the writers in the Nichols interviews. Such an outline helps situate the writers' comments regarding various aspects of literary production and appreciation on the continent. My emphasis, however, is on the use of radio as a medium of disseminating literature.

Radio Broadcasting in Kenya was started in 1928 to facilitate the three objectives of providing for the information, entertainment and educational needs in the country. As early as 1957, it was realised that there was a need to improve the teaching of the language arts, mathematics and the sciences in addition to teacher education. This led to the emergence of specialised centres in and around Nairobi between 1957 and 1965 devoted to curricular matters. Prior to independence, Kenyan society was divided into the following racially segregated groups: (a) Europeans; (b) Asians; (c) Arabs; and (d) Africans respectively. All aspects of life were structured along this racial totemic pole. Educational instruction was conducted in the indigenous languages spoken in the locality of the schools while the medium of instruction in urban centres was English.

Since attaining independence in 1963, Kenya has pursued national development that seeks to cater for all segments of society. Vast resources have been invested in the setting up of a national infrastructure with education taking as high as 40% of the gross national product yearly. Kenya instituted reforms to correct the lopsided racial and imperialist structure inherited from Britain. One way of achieving change was through educational radio broadcasting. This meant that African teachers trained to facilitate education in indigenous languages had to be in-serviced and retrained to become functional in the post independence era. Radio broadcasting was seen as a panacea that would lead to the eradication of the racially segregated system. However, radio broadcasting for educational purposes was deemed to fall outside the mandate of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and consequently moved to the Ministry of Education as the Schools Broadcasting Division. The Ministry of Education was then required to write scripts and produce radio programmes for transmission to elementary and secondary schools and teachers at various levels in the educational system. These materials were transmitted over national radio (then Voice of Kenya but currently the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation - KBC).

From the outset, it was realised that radio broadcasting was expensive and required repeat broadcasts for it to be an effective educational tool. Such massive expenditure would only be justified if large numbers of students and other learners listened to the broadcasts. In order to facilitate a larger listenership, the government has provided radio sets to schools. A free-tape-copying service was introduced to help the clientele access these materials. This service especially targeted schools experiencing poor reception of radio signals and timetable clashes. The Ministry of Education prepares schools broadcast timetables that cover programming for the whole year.

The Radio Division works closely with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation which broadcasts the scheduled educational programmes on a daily basis. The government of Kenya decided to have media services in education in order to facilitate curriculum development and curriculum implementation. The establishment of the necessary institutional infrastructure was even more urgent in the 1970s following the curricula revolution that had precipitated the abolition of the English Department at the University of Nairobi in 1968. This revolution entailed the changing of the literature curriculum from English and Eurocentric to Kenyan and Afrocentric. Implementation of this change meant that the system needed new textbooks in addition to an intellectual re-orientation among the teaching staff and student community.

As a result of the persistent lack of textbooks and other teaching resources, the KIE developed an audio-visual materials and book production partnership in which subject specialists come to the KIE to write audio-visual programmes and textbooks for the different levels in the school system. The KIE retains copyrights to all the materials produced in order to facilitate effective and efficient access and dissemination of knowledge. This approach proved instrumental when oral literature and local written literature were introduced in the literature curriculum in the early 1970s. The Lee Nichols' programmes were appropriate literary resources which the Kenyan authorities used in the literature schools broadcasting programmes.[25]

The 1980s witnessed a dramatic shrinkage in the production of educational materials and textbooks on the African continent. Both indigenous and foreign publishers faced a host of challenges and a shift in orientation.[26] A casual examination of the production of educational media reveals that there is urgent need for African educationists to restate anew the objectives and define appropriate strategies that would enable implementors to achieve the stated objectives. What then is the responsibility of African states in providing the prerequisite educational media to their nationals in the advent of the information superhighway? Is the continent going to slide deeper into ignorance while the rest of the world forges ahead? In trying to find answers to these questions, African nations have to engage in critical self examination in addition to learning from what other broadcasters have done with respect to the effective use of media in disseminating information.

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[25] Lee Nichols informed me his "Conversations with African Writers" series of programmes came to the attention of a United States Information Agency official who was visiting Kenya on a Library of Congress mission in the early 1970s. The official happened to be listening to some of the Voice of Kenya programmes and was pleasantly surprised to hear this Voice of America programme rebroadcast. On his return to the United States of America, the official entered into negotiations with the Voice of America to have a copy of the entire series of the Lee Nichols' programmes "Conversation with African Writers" deposited with the Library of Congress. Lee Nichols informed me that his series of programmes were rebroadcast in several African countries. In March 1995, I attended the 21st Annual Meeting and Conference of the African Literature Association in Columbus Ohio. This meeting gathers some of the world renowned African and Africanist scholars of African literatures. I interviewed several of them concerning "Conversations with African Writers" series of programmes. They told me that they appreciated the programmes very much. Some of them made audio copies of the programmes which they used in teaching African literature courses in Africa.

[26] The critical shortage of teaching materials in literature and other subject areas continues to plague Kenya and other African countries into the 1990s. Bernth Lindfors, the distinguished Africanist scholar, in discussing the severe lack of teaching resources in Anglophone African universities demonstrates the seriousness of the problem:

> One of the major problems for those involved in teaching or studying African literature in Africa is that of gaining access to primary and secondary sources. Books assigned for courses may not be available in local bookstores or libraries. Books ordered from overseas may be slow in arriving or may be so expensive that students - and teachers cannot afford them. For teachers the shortage of books in the classroom poses special problems. In extreme cases, as in several courses at the University of Calabar in Nigeria, for example, teachers had to resort to providing elaborate plot summaries of novels and plays that their students could not obtain. In other words, written literature was being taught without texts.

Geoffrey Cowan (Washington DC, March, 1995), the Director of the VOA states that national and international organisations have the responsibility to do two things. First, to define global information objectives. This should be done through establishing rules and regulations, standards and radio distribution frequencies. Second, to provide finance and develop a viable communications infrastructure. Developments in the 1980s and 1990s indicate that effective use of media as a catalyst to positive social change will be the major challenge many African countries have to contend with as they approach the 21st Century - the electronic age.

(*Long Drums and Canons,* 1995:128.)

CHAPTER SIX

RETROSPECTIVE FOCUS INTO THE FUTURE

Whenever one embarks on a journey, one makes contingency plans based on a survey of the terrain through which one is likely to traverse. When I embarked on this exploratory excursion into the world of words woven by African writers writing in the 1960s, I was confronted with a maze of roads, tracks, paths and a lot of brush and scrub. Diverse voices sang in descant and at times contrapuntally. Many opportunities presented themselves regarding the most profitable route to pursue. Initially, I gazed out to the furthest horizons which characteristically kept on receding each moment I thought that I was almost reaching my destination. I have sojourned in different places listening to both familiar and new voices that invited me to venture into foreign territories. Initially, the voices sounded cacophonous but the longer I listened to their vibrant timbre, the more I thought I could discern some euphony in terms of metaphor, imagery, intent, theme, audience, and worldview. At the planning stages, I made elaborate preparations about the route the journey would take into this uncharted terrain. However, many words later, as I reflect on the paths that have been trodden and new ones yet to be explored, I am enthralled by the many dazzling words that crackle with promise. The voices resound with a determination to forge new paths to self understanding and acceptance, and channels of communication with other sojourners and travellers as a means to gaining insight about their role in life.

I had set out to investigate the role radio played in disseminating literary and cultural communication among African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. The study was based on a series of conversations between Lee Nichols and 83 African writers entitled "Conversations with African Writers." These conversations had numerous voices that resonated with many disturbing questions that sought to make the African social world intelligible to the writers and their chosen audiences. The issues raised by the writers led me into a deeper maze of relationships which revealed complex dimensions which do not have easy solutions. My search was premised on the notion that modern day African societies rely on radio broadcasting as the major source of information, entertainment and education. As I journeyed along, I stumbled over the fact that radio broadcasting has been instrumental in bringing about tremendous political, economic and social transformation on a global scale. Listening to the vibrant voices, it became apparent that change in all its manifestations had introduced the element of ambiguity in the social worlds that embodied the writers, speakers and hearers. Colonial powers deployed radio broadcasting to instil in the subject peoples a sense of loyalty to the "mother" country. Consequently, radio broadcasting became a tool that perpetuated acculturation of colonised peoples by disseminating positive images, metaphors, idioms and perceptions about the coloniser. During the World Wars and the Cold War era, radio broadcasting was used by the contestants to create a certain type of reality surrounding their adversary. New opinions, perspectives and beliefs were created through symbolic means such that all countries of the world today strive to have their voice articulated and heard by global audiences.

Various uses to which people put radio broadcasting revealed one common strand, that is, the vibrant words uttered forth were potent only when they became migrant. These words criss-crossed geographical, economic, political, class, gender, and racial boundaries in spite of the utterers' hopes to contain the old boundaries or create new ones. The utterances seemed to come back to the original issues and concerns that had propelled them forth. I realised that to speak was to create and inscribe the utterer's presence. There is power in utterance and speakers will often find themselves contesting the exercise of power and control through the agency of speech. The African writers decried Western hegemonic power over and control of media information resources, especially publishing, through which the West singled out negative events and experiences to be reported about the Less Developed Countries.

My investigations revealed that the writers' claims about a negative inscription of African peoples by the West were articulated by the Non-Aligned Countries Movement in 1973 and by UNESCO (Masmoudi, 1978) and the MacBride Commission (1998). It was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that serious scholarly work addressed the West's hegemonic control of global media resources and the negative construction of reality about the Less Developed Countries (Schiller, 1976; Tunstall, 1977; Rosenblum, 1979; Norderstrong and Schiller, 1979; Smith, 1980; Lee, 1980; McPhail, 1981). This belated scholarly investigation of global communications problems and the distribution of media resources is an indication of the utter neglect of Third World issues and concerns the African writers spoke to. The above mentioned studies documented and verified Third World protestations regarding Western media hegemony. Terms like media imperialism, cultural domination and electronic colonialism were added to media studies vocabulary. These findings contextualised the writers' concerns about self identity and cultural awareness when viewed against the West's seemingly concerted efforts to inundate the writers' indigenous communities with its philosophy and mythologies.

In my efforts to comprehend the writers' conversations, I used the Social Construction of Reality and Media Systems Dependency Theories. These two theoretical orientations account for how societies construct their concepts of reality and the media used to disseminate and consolidate such notions in the general population. The Social Construction of Reality perspective suggests that reality is what it is said and presented to be, that is, reality in the social world has no objective existence apart from what people impute about external phenomena. A society's sense of reality is a social construct created through symbolic means by its members in their attempts at making their social universes comprehensible. Peoples' conception of reality is based on an accumulation of learned meanings and interpretations that are used to construct a shared frame of reference. All societies use symbolic means in the formation of cultural identity.

The African writers interviewed in the Nichols' series variously suggested that the African and diasporic social reality was threatened by horrendous social changes that had in most cases shattered their societies' shared notions about their role in the global social world. Interactions with the Other, that is, the Outsider, made their social reality ambiguous thereby rendering the relationships among members in these societies and between them and the different Other unintelligible. The situation flung their social universes into a state of unprecedented flux. Many of the writers explored the tensions arising from the instability change caused in their countries.

The Media Systems Dependency perspective demonstrates increasing reliance of society on media information resources in the construction of social reality in the ambiguous contexts created by modernisation. Increased social transformation and complexity will lead to a higher dependency on media information resources as a means to enable members of society to interpret and hopefully comprehend the process of change that engulfed them. Literature suggests that the Less Developed Countries are disadvantaged in the current Western dominated global media system. This domination raises questions about the issue of power and control of not only the media resources but also the content, phrasing and dissemination of information related to the Less Developed Countries. Tremendous social changes continue to bewilder the majority of people in Less Developed Countries. The process of change has rendered reality ambiguous.

In view of these discoveries, I suggest that African writers, planners, educators, scholars and media experts pay critical attention to issues of cultural identity and communications. In order to help vast populations in Africa comprehend social transformation, these experts should judiciously utilise media resources, especially radio broadcasting, to enable their peoples to retrieve a wholesome sense of who they are and what they could become in a rapidly changing world. Researchers and scholars should investigate the modalities and theoretical implications of cultural propagation and diffusion over the airwaves. Closely related to this research are questions of power and control in utterance and agency. Focus should aim at documenting the processes involved in meaning making and the subsequent interpretations arising from diverse conversation or dialogue contexts.

The writers in "Conversations with African Writers" did not only address the problems they perceived in their societies but also reminisced about the positive literary and cultural developments that were taking place on the continent. They commended some of their governments and other institutions for supporting literary creativity. The writers repeatedly mentioned support they received from some international radio broadcasters in disseminating their literary and creative works especially the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). A casual examination of their claims indicated that international radio broadcasters continue to exert considerable influence on the information flow to and from Less Developed Countries (Masmoudi, 1978; UNESCO, 1979; Cowan, 1994). In my search, I did not discover any detailed scholarly investigations into the nature and effects of such influence on cultural identity formation among populations in the recipient nations. My exploratory journey was limited to "Conversations with African Writers" and the Voice of America because of pragmatic considerations of accessibility to data and financial constraints. I suggest that comprehensive diachronic comparative studies involving a representative sample of both national and international radio broadcasters should be conducted by African and Africanist scholars to ascertain the effects these broadcasters may have on literary and cultural communications and development in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa in the past fifty years bearing in mind the attendant curricular and pedagogical challenges, innovations and iplications. Such a study is likely to reveal a wealth of data that could be instrumental in the creation of cultural studies programmes at various African universities and the diaspora in general. Probably, such an investigation may shed critical insight on the process of national development. I suggest that both national and international broadcasters avail their enormous data resources to scholastic literary inquiry as a means of facilitating such an undertaking. These institutions possess vital literary and cultural materials in print, audio, and visual formats. The materials contain rare comments and ideas made by African artists and cultural practitioners.

The data could be compiled into resource materials to be used in creative writing programmes reflecting the diverse backgrounds and cultures in Africa.

My journey into the African literary landscape was facilitated by Lee Nichols in two distinct ways. First, if he had not successfully documented the writers' conversations, I would not have been able to embark on this particular journey. Second, he has been available and forthcoming with suggestions on various aspects of the conversations between the writers and himself. He allowed me to share with the reader aspects about his early life, schooling, training and work experiences which were used to illuminate the study. I would like to observe that Nichols' success is based on his open-mindedness, love for investigative reporting, a genuine concern about the issues, problems and challenges important to ordinary people, and his professionalism. I also discovered that perhaps formal literary study of a people's culture may be useful in preparing a researcher to investigate literary and cultural communication processes, but it is not a necessary and inevitable condition which has to be satisfied by anyone who is keen to communicate with other people in different cultures. It would appear that the most important factor in investigative reporting and documentation is a dedication and faithfulness to professionalism and a love for the subject under investigation. Lee Nichols was able to delve into African literatures and cultures despite having very limited formal preparation. He also was able to record programmes in various indigenous African languages none of which he could speak. The point of this discussion is that serious scholarly work on literary and cultural materials is possible. African investigators should not be daunted by Africa's immense linguistic, literary, cultural and geographical diversities. Nichols was successful probably because he was careful not to appropriate and apply the ready-made frame of reference of his society and the media that he worked for in his dealings with plural societies and peoples he interacted with during the recording of the interviews. He avoided a monologue and encouraged conversation thereby allowing spaces and sites from which diverse vibrant voices could find expression. His choice of title is instructive in that it avoids closure.

Apart from listening to the conversations, I spent many days with Lee Nichols in conversation about his literary programmes. From our conversations I learnt that an utterance goes forth generating both intended and unintended consequences. Lee Nichols' account of his work environment reveals that the editorial function operates at the individual, institutional and societal levels in which hegemonic power and control relationships permeate the media system. Once words have been uttered, they will be processed and packaged in a manner profitable to the persons in control of the dissemination channels. The writers spoke about the almost insurmountable problems they encountered in the process of articulating their utterances in the oral and print media. They singled out the awesome and often intimidating power publishing houses exercised over creative writing and literary practice. Both the writers and Lee Nichols demonstrate that speakers must have both talent and skill in order to propel their utterances through webs of resistance. However, Lee Nichols shows how one could skilfully navigate through the web of relationships and be able to allow people in a conversation to articulate the central issues and concerns of their lives and times.

Discussion around the VOA reveals that media information resources will continue to play a key role in social mobilisation and transformation globally. Technologically and financially powerful nations are likely to continue a spirited articulation of their perceptions of social reality across geographical, linguistic, cultural and political landscapes. African countries need to seriously consider pooling their resources together and drastically overhauling their communications and cultural policies in view of the emerging globalisation trend fostered through transnational media networks like the Cable News Network, the BBC, VOA and the film industry in Hollywood.

I ventured into the writers' worlds through the taped conversations. It became evident that they perceived audience, language and intent as the cornerstones of their writing. They spoke to and with variegated audiences which ranged from mass audiences, school going audiences to the literate and orate, local and foreign, elitist and indigenous audiences. These writers generally suggested that African writers had to engage in committed, purposive writing that interrogated the central issues and concerns of their time. The writers pursued their vocation with resolute determination oftentimes generating tensions and conflicts with established sites of political, economic, social, and cultural authority and power. They considered themselves to be the carriers of the prophetic or visionary mantle which they were compelled to discharge without fear or favour. In this regard, they seem to be convinced that writers should have the liberty to use whichever genre and media that prove to be most appropriate and effective in the pertaining contexts.

Their interrogation of the language question, self identity, and cultural affirmation led to innovations in curricular design and content in literary studies on the continent. The writers considered language and the literature expressed in it as closely interrelated but distinct dimensions of cultural communication.

Many of these writers experienced immense difficulties in communicating with their audiences because the writers are often forced to use foreign languages. This situation is problematic in that a majority of the writers and their local audiences do not possess mother tongue proficiency in the use of these foreign languages. The situation could provide a fruitful area for scholars who wish to investigate the linguistic, literary and methodological strategies African writers, scholars, and teachers use in the study and teaching of literary communications and propagation in multilingual contexts.

The writers identified lack of financial and professional support, sparsity of local publishing houses, and political intolerance as the major impediments to literary creativity. The writers' vocation inevitably forces them to confront politicians. Contestation between writers and politicians arises from the former's dedication to the pursuance of justice and equity. Many African politicians inhabit sites of power they inherited from the colonial structure which they have preserved almost intact as Frantz Fanon had predicted. History shows that during the struggle to regain national sovereignty, politicians, writers and other opinion leaders worked in tandem with the primary objective of expelling the coloniser. Politicians have generally not fulfilled their part of the bargain. The politicians' failure has caused creative artists to harbour deep feelings of betrayal. The political situation is like the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace where refreshed guards come on duty without causing any changes to institutional monarchy. Consequently, politicians react out of a sense of guilt and suspicion toward creative artists and writers who persistently remind politicians about the cultural and political causes. It would appear that the struggle between the moral and legal forces will continue as long as the two sites of articulation fail to appropriate the same frame of reference in their efforts at making the social world intelligible to their peoples. I would suggest that African governments should engender an atmosphere that will nurture artistic creativity and cultural propagation by creating institutional mechanisms that would protect and nurture literary and cultural propagators. Artists have always considered themselves as the guardians of the social good. They contend with inimical political powers whenever such powers infringe on society.

One would expect society to rally around the voice of morality. Why then don't modern African artists enjoy the support of their communities like their traditional counterparts did? It would appear that modern African artists have failed to indigenise the foreign cultural practices they appropriated through formal education couched in foreign languages. Their alienation is a result of the disjuncture between the writers' utterance and that of the indigenous audiences.

These findings seem to cast a long shadow over the African artistic and literary landscapes. However, African writers devised survival strategies that attempt to bridge the gulf between them and their indigenous audiences. They used diverse channels of expression in popularising their artistic creativity. These included the print, film and radio channels. Among the print media, journals and literary magazines played a significant role in nurturing creative writing on the continent. The writers stated that various local and regional journals were instrumental in motivating and nurturing their creative writing endeavours by providing pockets of collegiality among African writers. (The role of literary journals in African artistic and literary development has been extensively researched).

One discerns a definite trend in which creative writing conveyed through print and film media eventually found expression and was popularised through radio broadcasting on both local and international networks. Radio broadcasting is set to play an even more significant role in literary communication because in the 1980s there were severe cutbacks in the publishing industry globally. Therefore African countries would best serve their interests by coordinating their radio networks in the furtherance of an African image.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

List of Abbreviations

ALA	African Literature Association
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
IRB	International Radio Broadcasting
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
LDC	Less Developed Countries
MSDT	Media Systems Dependency Theory
NIICO	New International Information and Communications Order
NWIO	New World Information Order
PANA	Pan-African New Agency
RAL	Research in African Literatures
SCRT	Social Construction of Reality Theory
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
URTNA	Union of Radio and Television Networks of Africa
UP	United Press
USIA	United States Information Agency
VOA	Voice of America
VOK	Voice of Kenya

Appendix II

The Lee Nichols Question Pool.

Prologue.

When and where were you born?

Could you briefly comment on your early childhood years?

Are there any memorable events or situations that you associate with your childhood?

Do you find them significant? If so why?

What were some of the most formative influences during your youth?

Could you please briefly explain?

Project Objectives and Purposes.

How or why did you decide to undertake the African writers' project?

Was the African writers' project your only involvement with Africa and her peoples?

What motivated you to embark on this venture?

What particularly had drawn you to African literature?

How much of this literature had you read before going to Africa?

What images or perceptions of Africa did you hold before undertaking the project?

How did you come to hold such images or perceptions about Africa and Africans?

In your opinion, did these images and perceptions remain the same, became modified or changed in one way or another? Could you please comment on your answer?

Why did you and your superiors at the VOA decide to spend/invest huge amounts of American public dollars in the African writers project? How would you justify such expenditure to the American public which remains ignorant of the VOA's programming to the rest of the world?

What did you intend to gain/ achieve from such an undertaking?

What did you intend to achieve through these interviews?

I find the title of the project interesting, "African Writers at the Microphone."

Could you please comment on your choice of title?

Professional Training.

Could you please briefly talk about your background and comment on whether or not it had adequately prepared you for the interview project?

To what extent did your training as a reporter influence the choice of questions that you asked your interviewees? Please explain?

How did you get involved with broadcasting?

Methodology

Why did you choose to use the interview method as a means of gathering data?

I would like to know the reasons and the methods you used in selecting/ deciding to interview African writers and not other people in the writers' societies? Why writers?

Did you interview other opinion leaders? To what effect and purpose?

What preparations and arrangements had you made before setting out to conduct the interviews?

What methods, strategies or techniques did you use in conducting and recording the interviews? Comment briefly.

Usually, a researcher sets out for the field with a particular organisational plan of action. Often, the researcher is compelled by circumstances in the field to make some modifications to the original plan. Did you encounter or experience any problems or challenges during your fieldwork and how did they influence your task?

What changes in your plans did you have to make while on the ground?

Did such changes help or hinder you from achieving your purposes?

Did you change, modify or abandon some of the questions you had prepared to ask these African writers? Comment on whether you made any unforeseen changes giving examples of particular events and incidents you might recall.

Were there any particularly satisfying encounters/ experiences during your time in the field?

Product Preparation

What criteria did you use during the editing process in deciding:

(a) What was to be aired?
(b) What was not to be aired? Why?

What were the underlying reasons for the decisions that you made while organising the material for presentation?

Wole Soyinka has described artists as stray electrons, that is, free spirits that will often resist staying within the prescribed orbit. They have a habit of moving within and out of the imaginary worlds that they create:

i) how did you handle the ideas, views, comments and attitudes that were critical of the writers' countries in view of the VOA's policy? Would you give examples? What effect do you think such critical comments may have had on genuine self-expression and the free flow of information?

ii) did you find any divergent worlds portrayed by the writers? What role did your interviewing methods and strategies play in presenting these varied worlds to your audience?

Your interviews could be described as a gold mine of thoughts on African literature. How did you organise them for presentation ? What challenges did you have to overcome during:

i) the actual interviewing process

ii) transcribing the material
iii) preparing the tapes for radio

Did the material have any personal relevance to you? Please explain.

Did you or do you feel a sense of achievement or failure on looking back to the African writers project?

Were you satisfied with the "product" you gathered from your field experiences in Africa? Briefly comment.

Dialogues/ Polylogues

I assume that one of the purposes of interviewing is to establish or open communication links. What ideas, concepts or pleasurable experience were communicated through your interaction with the Africa writers you interviewed?

Any writing will be about a real and or an imagined world that involves human interactions and sharing of those endearing and enduring experiences that I guess make life and living possible. Did you have occasion to interact with ordinary Africans and enter into their worlds apart from the worlds of the writers?

The writers talked about the imaginary worlds they created using words while living in a real world:

i) what were your perceptions of the worlds presented by the writers and those of ordinary Africans?

ii) did you feel a sense of tension among these worlds?

iii) were there any bridges among these worlds?

Assuming that you, the Voice of America and the interviewees had specific agenda to achieve through these conversations:

i) were the different perspectives, ideas, assumptions and expectations mutually satisfied?

ii) did you feel or find any sense of conflict of interests emerging from your conversations, especially so because you represented the VOA banner and what it stood for?

Audience Considerations.

What senses or perceptions of audience were held by:

a]

- i) you as the principal researcher?
- ii) the Voice of America?
- iii) the African writers? and
- iv) the audiences that were targeted and reached?

b]

- i) did these audience notions or perceptions have any effect on the interview questions and actual processes? Could you please explain?

- ii) were such perceptions proved correct or false?

Were there any primary and/or secondary segments within the target audience?

Radio as a tool of Communication.

What are your comments on the presentation of images and models through media?

Communications studies and research have documented that the mass media will inform, educate and entertain as they conduct their business. To what extent would you consider your interviews to have fulfilled any of the three mentioned goals or purposes?

What do you consider to be the role of radio in disseminating cultural matters in a predominantly non-literate society?

Drawing from your vast experiences with the mass media, what would you say is the relationship between radio broadcasting and:

- i) political institutions
- ii) economic institutions
- iii) educational institutions

iv) cultural institutions

Basing your answer on your long and distinguished career in the media, what would you term as the central business of radio broadcasting?

Could you please relate your answer to the "Conversations with African Writers" programmes in particular and the other African projects that you undertook while at the VOA?

Epilogue

You have a wealth of experience with the mass media. What do you see as the role and function of the media in the dissemination of literature in particular and culture in general?

Are there any experiences or thoughts you can convey from your other interview series that would shed light on the topic, "Radio and the Development of a Pan-African Literary Heritage," specifically:

i) African Universities in the Seventies ii) Science in Africa

iii) Prominent African Women

What, if anything, would you:
i) do differently if you were to undertake the African writers project again, and
ii) not do differently? Why?
What impressions did you carry away with you?
What impressions did you leave behind with your African friends?

Appendix III

Questionnaire for The Voice of America.

Would you briefly describe and explain your station's broadcasting policy and orientation?

What are your basic goals and what strategies do you use in ensuring that these goals are achieved?

Please briefly describe and comment on the nature of your services.

Whom would you define as constituting your primary audience?

How does your organisation identify its target audience?

Intense global competition for a consumer market has come to define and qualify the nature of communication between and among people. What mechanisms has your institution put in place to ensure that it continues to retain its clientele?

People express interest in different things at different times. What strategies does your organisation use to ensure that it transmits the appropriate material?

Could you please explain and comment on the nature of the content of your programmes beamed to your audiences?

Does the Voice of America choose subject matter that is from, by and about the target audiences or from, by and about America to the target audiences? Please explain.

I presume that it is not possible for anyone to predict how well any transmission will be received by the target audience. How does the VOA handle those situations in which the intended purposes of a transmission produce an unintended response from your variegated audience?

Closely related to the above question, what are the duties and responsibilities of those people involved in the preparation of your programmes, especially when a programme elicits negative responses from the public?

The Voice of America desires and aspires to reach a global audience through its broadcasts. I assume that this costs colossal amounts of American public dollars. How does the Voice of America justify such expenditure to the American political establishment and to a public that has been forced to undergo severe economic cutbacks?

The current global economic thinking seems to have drifted toward a monetarist approach to any and all forms of expenditure:

i) what does the Voice of America expect on the "return on its investment"?

ii) what form is the "return on investment" expected to take?

iii) how soon is this return expected?

iv) incidentally, what are you investing in, and who are your beneficiaries?

The nature of your organisation seems to dictate that you target a heterogeneous audience. What programming mix have you found to produce the desired objectives?

Do you, as an organisation, ever get to hear from your target audiences?

Do you ever listen to them? Please explain.

How does the VOA select the people to be interviewed?

How does your station select content for its radio broadcasts?

Who determines the content to be aired?

What is involved in the process? Could you please explain?

Are there any specific criteria that must be fulfilled before any material is considered appropriate for broadcasting?

What is the role of the producer in the scripting of the material for radio broadcasting?

Any human interaction is open to misperceptions, misrepresentations and misunderstanding. I believe that such hitches in the communication circuit could be both conscious and unconscious. How does the VOA regulate and massage such folds as it weaves through the corporation's, interviewees', and the target audiences' cloak of interests?

I presume that communication tries to build bridges between and among peoples, ideas, convictions, opinions, and perceptions. To what extent has the VOA moved in this direction?

Inevitably, human beings bring with them particular and at times peculiar perceptions and perspectives to any dialogue as they negotiate a position or vantage point from which to understand the world/phenomena around them. How genuine has been the VOA's efforts at enhancing mutual understanding itself and its audiences?

Would you describe your organisation as having made any significant contributions to the following:

i) art in general
ii) literature
iii) cultural understanding and communication?

Communication studies have indicated that the mass media aim to inform, educate and entertain. Which of these goals does your organisation propagate in its efforts to nurture cultural communication?

Would it be a fair comment to claim that entertainment dollars have overwhelmed education dollars?

With reference to Lee Nichols' "Conversations with African Writers" programme, could you please explain why the VOA chose to use literature as a communication tool?

Most societies have two modes of literature: mainstream and popular. Does your organisation perceive any tension between these two modes of transmitting literature in particular and cultural material in general?

It appears to me that today's opinion leaders are those that have access to and in control of the mass media. Writers, educators and essayists seem to be at a distance from the mass media. Why did the VOA decide on interviewing writers?

How much real power does literature or cultural material have in changing social values? Please briefly explain.

Would you agree or disagree with McLuhan's claim that "the medium is the message"?

Comment on the strengths and weaknesses of using the aural medium as a channel of communication?

Briefly describe and comment on the mandate and structure of your organisation.

What is its relation to the political, economic and cultural establishments both in the US and your target countries ?

Who funds your operations? Do you find the quality of your programming compromised by your ties to your financial benefactors?

How much freedom do you enjoy in terms of setting of policy, programming and upholding the strong American tradition of freedom of expression and speech?

Do you as an organisation extend the same attitudes and expectations to your dealings with foreign peoples and their cultures?

Comment on the successes and failures of your literary and cultural programmes in relation to your mandate and original intentions.

What image would the VOA like to have among its international audiences?

What strategies are you using to ensure that such an image is created and maintained world-wide?

How different is the VOA's approach from propaganda?

Do you have any continuing or last word you would like your audiences to hear?

Appendix IV

"Conversations with African Writers" Interviewees.

Abbie Gubengna: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July, 1973
Abdel-Hai, Mohammed: Khartoum, Sudan, August 2nd, 1978
Abdilatif Abdalla: Dar es Sallam, Tanzania, September 8th, 1974
Abubakar Imam: Kaduna, Nigeria, August 14th, 1974
Aluko, T.M.: Lagos, Nigeria, July 28th, 1974
Anya, Udegbunem: Enugu, Nigeria, August 5th, 1974
Anyidoho, Kofi: Accra, Ghana, July 19th, 1974
Ashong-Katai, Seth T.: Accra, Ghana, July, 1974
Charley, Dele (Raymond): Freetown, Sierra Leone, July 3rd, 1975
Chimombo, Steve: Zomba, Malawi, August 8th, 1975
Cordor, S. Henry: Monrovia, Liberia, July 11th, 1975
Decker, Thomas: Freetown, Sierra Leone, July 3rd, 1975
Dube, Phola: Kwaluseni, Swaziland, August 29th, 1976
Ekwensi, Cyprian: Enugu, Nigeria, August 9th, 1974
El Mak, Ali: Khartoum, Sudan, August 4th, 1978
Faleti, Adebayo: Ibadan, Nigeria, July 30th, 1974
Hadis Alemayehu: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 4th, 1973
Head, Bessie: Serowe, Botswana, September 25th, 1976
Ibrahim Ishaq Ibrahim: Khartoum, Sudan, August 4th, 1978
Isola, Akiwumi: Lagos, Nigeria, July 28th, 1974
Jow, Charles: Banjul, The Gambia, July 4th, 1975
Kayper-Mensah, Albert: Accra, Ghana, July 20th, 1974
Kezilahabi, Euphrase: Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, September 7th, 1974
Khaketla, B.M.: Maseru, Lesotho, September 16th, 1976
Khaketla, Mrs. N.M.: Maseru, Lesotho, September 14th, 1976
Khasu, Kona: Monrovia, Liberia, July 11th, 1975
Kor, Buma, Victoria, Cameroon, July 30th, 1975
Kwegyriba, Adwoa: Accra, Ghana, July 19th, 1974
lo Liyong, Taban: Khartoum, Sudan, August 15th, 1978
Lukhele, S.Z.: Mbabane, Swaziland, August 27th, 1976
Machobane, J.J.: Maseru, Lesotho, September 16th, 1976
Maddy, Yulisa Amadu: Freetown, Sierra Leone, July 2nd, 1975
Maillu, David: Nairobi, Kenya, June 13th, 1978
Malikongwa, Albert G.T.K.: Gaborone, Botswana, September 23rd, 1976
Mangua, Charles: Abijan, Ivory Coast, July 19th, 1975
Mapanje, Jack: Zomba, Malawi, August 10th, 1975
Matsebula, J.S.M.: Mbabane, Swaziland, September 2nd, 1976
Mbasi-Manga, Francis: Yaounde, Cameroon, July 26th, 1975
Mbeboh, Kitts: Yaounde, Cameroon, July 24th, 1975 and July 15th, 1978
Mbise, Ismael: Toronto, Canada, September 30th, 1974
Mengistu, Lamma: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 7th, 1973

Mlama, Penina (Mhando): Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, September 9th, 1974
Mnthali, Felix: Zomba, Malawi, August 8th, 1975
Mohamme Al-Mahdi Magzoub: Khartoum, Sudan, July 31st, 1978
Molefe, R.D.: Gaborone, Botswana, September 26th, 1976
Moore, Bai T.: Monrovia, Liberia, July 12th, 1975
Motlhasedi, Gabriel Caesar: Gaborone, Botswana, September 26th, 1976
Mpashi, Stephen A.: Lusaka, Zambia, August 19th, 1975
Mphahlele, Es'kia (Ezekiel): Wayne, Pennsylvanai, U.S.A., ca. 1974
Mulaisho, Dominic: Lusaka, Zambia, August 16th, 1975
Munonye, John: Enugu, Nigeria, August 1974
Musa Galaal: Mogadishu, Somalia, July 27th, 1978
Mutswairo, Solomon: Washington, D.C., April 26th, 1977
Mwangi, Meja (David): Nairobi, Kenya, August 25th, 1974
Ngugi wa Thiong'o (James Ngugu): Nairobi, Kenya, August 27th, 1974
Ntsane, K.E.: Maseru, Lesotho, September 16th, 1976
Nwapa, Flora: Enugu, Nigeria, August 5th, 1974
Ogot, Grace: Nairobi, Kenya, August 28th, 1974
Okai, Atukwei: Accra, Ghana, July 23rd, 1974
Okara, Gabriel: Lagos, Nigeria, August 10th, 1974
Ole Kulet, Henry R.: Nairobi, Kenya, August 22nd, 1974
Omotoso, Kole: Ibadn, Nigeria, July 31st, 1974
Opoku, A.A.: Accra, Ghana, July 22nd, 1974
Owusu, Martin: Waltham, Massachusetts, U.S.A., August 28th, 1978
Oyono-Mbia, Guillaume: Yaounde, Cameroon, July 24th, 1978
p'Bitek, Okot: Austin, Texas, U.S.A., May 1978
Rotitmi, Ola: Ile-Ife, Nigeria, ca. July 1974
Saidi, William: Lusaka, Zambia, August 18th, 1975
Sankawulo, Wilton: Monrovia, Liberia, July 14th, 1975
Selolwane, Onalenna: Gaborone, Botswana, September 26th, 1976
Simoko, Patu, Lusaka, Zambia, August 17th, 1975
Sithole, Ndabaningi: Lusaka, Zambia, August 17th, 1975
Sofola, Zulu: Ibadan, Nigeria, July 31st, 1974
Solomon Deressa: Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.: May 14th, 1974
Sutherland, Efua: Accra, Ghana, July 21st, 1974
Tejani Bahadur: Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A., March 25th, 1977
Timpunza Mvula, Enoch: Zomba, Malawi, August 8th, 1975
Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 1973
Uka, Kalu: Nsukka, Nigeria, August 4th, 1974
Wanjala, Chris: Nairobi, Kenya, August 23rd, 1974
Yam Yam (Abdulcadir Hersi Siad) Mogadishu, Somalia, July 25th, 1978
Yeboah-Afari, Ajoa V.: Accra, Ghana, July 22nd, 1974
Yirenkyi, Asiedu: Accra, Ghana, July 18th, 1974